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ABSTRACT

This roundtable focused on issues related to the role of the Tibetan language in Tibet's future. A statement by Nicolas Tournadre, Associate Professor of Linguistics, the University of Paris, France, addresses "The Dynamics of Tibetan-Chinese Bilingualism: The Current Situation and Future Prospects" (e.g., the first regulation protecting Tibetan in China, Tibetan-Chinese mixed speech, language levels, causes of decline and marginalization, and consequences of the current linguistic policy). A statement by David Germano, Professor, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, the University of Virginia, United States, offers "A Brief Survey of Issues Relating to Tibetan Language in the 21st Century" (e.g., the situation of Tibetan in Tibetan culture in the 21st century, the value of Tibetan to modern Tibetan culture, possible futures of Tibetan, and opportunities for the U.S. government). A statement by Losang Rabgey, commonwealth scholar and Ph.D. candidate at the school of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, England, discusses the paradox of Litang county, education in Chungba Valley, and bilingualism and biculturalism in diaspora. The three prepared statements are appended. (SM)

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TEACHING AND LEARNING TIBETAN: THE ROLE OF THE TIBETAN LANGUAGE IN TIBET'S FUTURE

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ROUNDTABLE

BEFORE THE

CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

APRIL 7, 2003

Printed for the use of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China

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TEACHING AND LEARNING TIBETAN: THE ROLE OF THE TIBETAN LANGUAGE IN TIBET'S FUTURE

MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2003

CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE
COMMISSION ON CHINA,
Washington, DC.

The roundtable was convened, pursuant to notice, at 2:30 p.m., in room 2255, Rayburn House Office Building, John Foarde [staff director] presiding.

Also present: David Dorman, deputy staff director; Karin Finkler, Office of Representative Joe Pitts; Andrea Yaffe, Office of Senator Carl Levin; Lary Brown, specialist on labor issues; Steve Marshall, senior advisor; Susan Weld, general counsel; and Andrea Worden, senior counsel.

Mr. FOARDE. Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to another issues roundtable of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. One of the things we have tried to do consistently over the past year is to start on time and to end on time. The time has come for us to begin. Of course, as always with hearings and roundtables on Capitol Hill, people come in and leave and what have you. That's part of the rules of the road up here and part of what we have to live with. Welcome to all who are here in the audience and welcome particularly to our three panelists.

This afternoon we are going to take a look at some very interesting questions about Tibet and particularly the role of the Tibetan language in Tibet's future. I think it is true to say that Chinese officials and Chinese news media often portray Tibetans as moving briskly toward a modern prosperous future, one of universal literacy and full integration into the Chinese cultural and economic mainstream.

A great many Tibetans paint the future less enthusiastically, citing concerns about whether their most fundamental self-identifiers, particularly their language, will survive the profound changes underway throughout the Tibetan areas of China. So, to look at these questions, we have asked the three distinguished panelists to join us today. We appreciate your sharing your expertise with us.

We will work on the principle that we established a year or so ago and go usually "window to wall." So, we will began this afternoon with Nicolas Tournadre. Dr. Tournadre is an associate professor of linguistics at the University of Paris 8, and a member of the Laboratoire de Langues et Civilisations à Tradition Orale of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and co-director of the

Tibetan Language Collection and the Tibetan and Himalayan Digital Library at the University of Virginia. He is an expert on Tibetan linguistics, knows classical Tibetan, standard Tibetan, as well as several other dialects. During the past 15 years, he has spent more than 3 years on the Tibetan plateau conducting research and collecting data about the Tibetan language and its dialects. Professor Tournadre is the founder of the association, Schools on the Roof of the World, which has built four schools in Tibet and supports writers of the Tibet Autonomous Region [TAR] as well as in Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures [TAP] outside the TAR. He is the author of several books on the Tibetan language, among them the "Manual Tibétain Standard (1998)" and a forthcoming English language "Manual of Standard Tibetan (2003)." Welcome, Professor Tournadre, please. I should say that each panelist will have 10 minutes to make an oral presentation. After 8 minutes I will give you the signal that you have 2 minutes remaining. If for some reason you don't have all the time you would like to make your points, we will try to catch them up in the question and answer session after each panelist has presented.

So, please go ahead.

STATEMENT OF NICOLAS TOURNADRE, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF LINGUISTICS, THE UNIVERSITY OF PARIS 8, PARIS, FRANCE

Mr. TOURNADRE. Well, thanks a lot everybody for being here. I think it is a very important issue we are debating. I want to thank especially my old friend, Steve Marshall, for inviting me and my colleagues.

The first thing I would like to say is that there is a real threat of extinction or very serious decline of the Tibetan language and the Tibetan culture within two—or at the most three—generations. That will be happening very soon. During the last 15 years, I have personally witnessed this decline. So, it goes in a very, very rapid way in Tibet.

Languages are not neutral. They convey very specific social and cultural behaviors and ways of thinking. So, the extinction of the Tibetan language will have tremendous consequences for the Tibetan culture. The culture cannot be preserved without it.

Why is it important to preserve this culture? Think about 5 or so million people surrounded by more than 1.5 billion Chinese-speaking people and why is it important. It is important because the Tibetan language and culture are extremely original. Forget about linguistics, medicine, or architecture; just take literature. Tibetan is one of the four oldest and greatest in volume and most original literatures of Asia, along with Sanskrit, Chinese, and Japanese literatures. So, that is a very good reason for the heritage of humanity to keep this culture.

The second point is that for the Tibetan economy it is very important in nearly every sector. The Tibetan language is very important. Right now the rate of unemployment in Tibet is extremely high. A lot of rural Tibetans, whether nomads or peasants, are almost like foreigners in their own country and they don't have the linguistic ability to find jobs. When they come to the cities, their culture is marginalized and devalued. So this leads also to the

marginalization and devaluation of the people themselves. Without the Tibetan language, it is clear that Tibet won't be Tibet any more.

The third point is that Tibetan language and culture are extremely important for the secularization and modernization of the Tibetan society. Right now, a lot of young Tibetans go to monasteries because that is one of the few places left for traditional culture. If they had a possibility to really study their own culture in middle school, a lot of them would prefer to study in lay schools.

The Chinese Government is not unaware of this situation. The proof is that, in May 2002, the Chinese Government endorsed new regulations about the Tibetan language. That's the first instance of regulations protecting a so-called "minority language" within the People's Republic of China. So, of course it is encouraging, but at the same time, it shows that the threat is extremely heavy. It is very urgent.

Now, I will try to touch very briefly on the causes of the decline. Among the causes, I would say there are two non-linguistic causes, the main ones probably. And there are three causes which are related to the language itself.

The first one is certainly a political cause; that is, for instance, the people are not really allowed to have meetings in Tibetan. They are theoretically allowed to, but actually in practice there is a very strong pressure not to have these meetings in their own language. So even when 20 or more Tibetans are meeting together, they speak in Chinese. The second reason is educational. All middle school education is in Chinese, even though books and manuals do exist in mathematics, physics, and chemistry in Tibetan. They have done an enormous amount of work, but it is pointless, as they are not used.

Then there are three specific linguistic reasons. Dialectal variation is still extremely high. For instance, the use of standard spoken Tibetan is still limited, especially in Qinghai, Sichuan, and Yunnan. There is also another reason which is what I call severe diglossia. The high variety is literary Tibetan, and the low variety is spoken Tibetan. There is a big distance between those two which is much greater than between literary English and spoken English. Learning literary Tibetan is nearly like learning a different language. Of course, not that extreme, but it is very difficult for children.

There is also another hindrance. This is the emergence of Tibetan-Chinese mixed languages, which are called in Tibetan "rama lugkä" [ra-ma-lug skad], which is a very dangerous phenomenon because it impoverishes Tibetans and, of course, Chinese as well. So people are not fluent in either of the languages. The last reason is the linguistic gap between the urban and the rural Tibetans. There is really a complete cut within society, a complete gap.

However, I am still a little optimistic. I think if we exert pressure, and take measures, and implement different projects, we can still ameliorate the situation. I don't think it is over. A civilization of 1,300 years of literature cannot disappear like that. I do believe it is still possible to do something.

One of the real problems is the current lack of prestige of the Tibetan language. Because of the reasons I mentioned earlier, the

Tibetans now think "Tibetan is not useful to fill one's stomach ['bod skad brgyab na grod khog rgyag gi ma red']." That's why they believe it is better to speak Chinese.

Now, I will return to three or four basic propositions. The general idea is, of course, to promote the Tibetan language and culture in the educational system and to establish a real Tibetan-Chinese bilingual education, not as it is now, a monolingual Chinese society, but a real bilingual society. It also means advertising the new Chinese law and exerting pressure so that it is really implemented.

I also think promoting standard spoken Tibetan is extremely important because, as I said, there is a high rate of unemployment and also an incredible level of illiteracy. It is important to promote standard spoken Tibetan, which is the vernacular language, and to reduce the difficulties caused by diglossia. It is possible, for instance, to fund projects that will publish classical texts in the vernacular language. That is one thing. There are even some very concrete things we can do from the West. For example, the creation of literary prizes and awards for Tibetan writers. The support of artists and writers who would travel in the countryside and meet the peasants and organize cultural festivals. We could also support radio broadcasting so that they could broadcast the classics of Tibetan and foreign literature. Pay teachers in Tibet so they can collect tapes of traditional music and folk tales that have not been recorded. Help to create calligraphy competitions and spelling competitions. These are all very concrete steps. Anything that makes the Tibetans feel that their language and culture does have prestige.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Tournadre appears in the appendix.]

Mr. FOARDE. Let's pick up those fascinating ideas during the question and answer session. Thank you very much.

Our next panelist is David Germano. Professor Germano is associate professor of Tibetan and Buddhist studies at the University of Virginia, and director of the Tibetan and Himalayan Digital Library. He has published a variety of articles and one edited volume on diverse topics in Tibetan studies. He has spent a total of 7 years conducting research on Tibetan cultural areas on a variety of topics. Over the past 4 years, Professor Germano has established collaborative contacts with the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences and Tibet University for a long-term collaborative exchange and for research projects. In this context, he has co-directed large international research expeditions in each of the last 4 years and has been concentrating on building a broad international consortium of universities to work on interdisciplinary topics facilitated by digital technology.

Professor Germano, welcome.

STATEMENT OF DAVID GERMANO, PROFESSOR, TIBETAN AND BUDDHIST STUDIES, THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA

Mr. GERMANO. Thank you. I would like to begin by thanking the Commission for hosting this topic, and particularly to thank Steve Marshall for inviting us and his role in arranging it. He is an old friend who I haven't seen for maybe a decade? Yes. In Lhasa.

In my talk, I would like to briefly cover four areas in the way of background information and to say first of all, that I concur completely with Professor Tournadre's remarks. The four areas are, first of all, a basic background in the current situation in the Tibetan language; second, the value of the Tibetan language in modern Tibetan culture; third, possible futures—negative and positive; and fourth, general recommendations for how specifically the American Government could actually have a constructive role in these futures.

So, first of all, in terms of the background situation of Tibetan language, it is important to understand that Tibetan is not simply a language the way that modern English is a language, with a broad range of speakers who easily understand each other in accordance with common vocabulary, grammar, and so forth. In accordance with the old linguistic adage that "a dialect is a language without an army, and a language is a dialect with an army," Tibetan can be thought of as a series of languages, rather than dialects. They are often mutually incomprehensible.

For example, I have a Tibetan visiting right now from Northern Kham, or Sichuan Province, who first came and my wife is from Lhasa, a native speaker of Tibetan—and he understood little of what we said. It took a couple of weeks, but gradually we began to establish a basic understanding. So, the divergence of dialects is extremely great. There is no standard Tibetan.

However, there is an emergent proto-standard Tibetan that is spoken widely in the diasporic community, as well as in the Tibetan Autonomous Region. It is based on the Lhasa language. It is a language which is a good basis for the emergence of a standard Tibetan that could be used across Tibetan regions in addition to people's regional dialects.

This standard Tibetan, which has been emerging over the past two or three decades continues to not be a standard in many parts of Eastern Tibet, which means that Tibetans often rely on a second language to speak amongst themselves. So, when a Tibetan from Kham [Sichuan] or Amdo [Qinghai], meets a Tibetan from Lhasa, they might very well rely on Chinese, more typically. So the lack of this standard Tibetan across the entire region of Tibetan culture continues to be a pressing necessity. And there is another old adage which is, "any standard is better than no standard," an issue particularly compelling in relationship to languages and communities.

Second, literary Tibetan has a long and distinguished tradition going back at least to the seventh century, typically referred to as classical Tibetan. The most important thing to keep in mind about classical Tibetan is that it is a remarkably conservative tradition in terms of spelling, grammar usage, vocabulary, to the point that someone who is conversant in modern classical Tibetan can actually pick up 10th century, 11th century, 12th century texts and read them fluently. Obviously, something not true at all, for example, in English.

Unfortunately, most of the dialects are not equally conservative in pronunciation and their own vocabulary. So, classical Tibetan, as Professor Tournadre mentioned, is many ways dramatically divergent from spoken Tibetan. The spelling and pronunciation are dra-

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matically divergent lexical items, and so forth. This makes classical Tibetan unnecessarily difficult to learn. It also entails that many standard colloquial spoken terms have no standardized spelling or use in literary Tibetan.

A modern literary Tibetan has begun to emerge in creative writing, newspapers, academic essays, and the like. This emergence of kind of modern literary Tibetan has yet to become fully a transregional vernacular, literary Tibetan that could be understood by children easily, learned, easily used in kind of daily communications, as well as essay writing, all the way down to logging onto the world wide web and so forth.

So, this continues to be an important issue on the literary front, namely the degree to which a vernacular, transregional, literary Tibetan is emerged and encouraged. In the absence of a kind of systematic support from the government, it continues to be a problem.

Another issue I would like to note in the way of background is that, often Tibetans you meet are completely fluent in spoken Tibetan, being native speakers, but they lack specific colloquial competencies. It is not simply an issue where they are pressured in terms of a specific context, and they switch over to Chinese and so forth, but often they are actually unable to use Tibetan in specific professional or intellectual environments. They don't know the vocabulary. They have no habituation of how to talk, and so forth.

So, when you enter in things like computer science, mathematics, biology, certain governmental context, they literally don't know how to talk. Thus in addition to the issue of being fluent in spoken Tibetan, there is the issue of target colloquial competencies, a particularly important issue in Tibet these days.

A final issue in the way of background is the use of Tibetan in digital contexts. The lack of a standard international Tibetan encoding, which means Tibetan scripts could be used on the Internet, computer operating systems, and so forth, has had a devastating impact on the use of Tibetan in digital and Web contexts from educational sites, to commercial venues, to social arenas like chat rooms.

So, the second topic is "who cares?" Really, who gives a damn? Nicolas and I happen to love Tibet and have spent our life devoted to it, but why don't Tibetans just speak Tibetan at home and speak Chinese in professional contexts, and use Chinese for all written needs? On the other hand, why don't they just give up Tibetan all together and simply speak Chinese, a standard option across the world in terms of minority cultures in relation to the politically and economically dominant languages in their national context? I can only provide a couple of brief thoughts on that subject.

First of all, the first situation, namely Tibetan becoming a domestic language and Chinese becoming the professional language and a literary language, is one that simply consigns Tibetans to oblivion and to perpetual second class status. Even studies within China itself have shown consistently that Tibetans who train and test in Chinese medium contexts persistently perform worse than when they are able to train and test in Tibetan. By using their own mother tongue for training, education, and testing, they perform markedly better on standard intelligence and other tests than they do when they are forced to use Chinese. So, this bilingualism of a

private/professional variety will always leave them at a disadvantage in educational and professional circumstances.

Second, what about simply becoming Chinese? They could become, in two or three generations—in fact, we can all see the pathway very clearly marked—native speakers of Chinese. Here I think we enter perhaps more philosophical considerations. First of all, it creates a traumatic discontinuity with the 1,300-year history of their own literary culture, with different intellectual disciplines, professional environments, ways of life, and so forth. More importantly, a people's sense of identity, place, and time, it has been argued by intellectual after intellectual over the last century, is inextricably bound up with their language. So, by losing the Tibetan language, the specifically Tibetan identity and world, the culture, insights, values and behaviors, is essentially consigned to the past.

Third, possible futures of Tibetan language—in my 2 minutes remaining—I would say first of all, in two or three decades, we are looking at the possible disappearance of Tibetan where reading and writing becomes the province of a few isolated monasteries. When urban Tibetans rarely speak Tibetan, and even in rural Tibet, spoken Tibetan comes under increasing pressure. That is clearly a very possible, if not likely, trajectory where we might go from this crossroad.

I also think there is another possibility, a possibility in which standard Tibetan could become widely spoken, where standard Tibetan could become again a medium for educational and commercial context, and a newly generated vernacular literary Tibetan could become one that is meaningful in educational and personal context, which brings me to my conclusion, my fourth point, conveniently, which is that we can make a difference. I have met with people from the American Government who have said, "Oh, it's hopeless. It has long since gone past a crossroads, and even if it wasn't hopeless, the situation is so corrupt and problematic in China's Tibet, that you can simply do nothing, even by throwing funding and other kinds of support in there, it simply is counterproductive."

I would like to say that for those of us who have lived for years in so-called "China's Tibet" and spent our lives devoted to issues of Tibetan culture and language, our common consensus is that this is the most profoundly mistaken view you could possibly take. The willpower, the ability, and commitment is there on the part of Tibetans and Chinese in China to make a difference on issues pertaining to the Tibetan language. The government's stated policies on the subject are often positive, even if there is little practical follow through or support.

These various government organizations—as for example, Professor Tournadre and I have shown over and over—in establishing long-term collaborative contracts, that are willing to have others help in implementing these policies, even if they, themselves are not actively implementing them. Of course, that is easier said than done. What it boils down to, simply, is funding. Of course, we all agree on the importance of medical and economic health for Tibetans, but we also cannot lose sight of the equal and essential importance of Tibetan language and culture. It is important to support the evolving nexus of foreign experts in Tibetan language and

culture who have a commitment to the support of educational and linguistic environments back in Tibet. What is important is not simply an exchange where Tibetans are taken out of Tibet and brought to the United States, but investment in Tibet, working with dedicated professionals in the institutions which survive our departure and presence.

So, with this, in conclusion, I think these emerging partnerships, if adequately supported, offer another vision of a better tomorrow, not one in which Tibetan triumphs over Chinese, but one in which Tibetan and Chinese can co-exist. The value of this is basically the preservation of a Tibetan difference, a unique identity shaped over centuries, which is now in direct danger of succumbing to the forces of sameness. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Germano appears in the appendix.]

Mr. FOARDE. A model presentation, Professor Germano, not least because you were right on time.

I know that academics are used to talking for 45 or 50 minutes at a time, and 10 minutes is not very long. So, you've both done marvelously. Thank you for that.

Our final panelist this afternoon is Losang Rabgey. She is a commonwealth scholar and Ph.D. candidate at the School of Oriental and African studies at the University of London, where she specializes in gender anthropology and the transnational Tibetan diaspora. She plans to defend her thesis in the spring of 2003, and we wish her well with that. Her field work focuses on oral life histories of Tibetan women in India and the West. She has presented her work at universities, including Middlebury College, Harvard University, the University of California at Santa Cruz, and New York University. Losang has lobbied at the United Nations and co-founded an NGO that is building a rural school focusing on women's education in Tibet. She now broadcasts a Tibetan language radio show on women's issues, and is a staff member at the International Campaign for Tibet here in Washington.

After her parents fled Tibet in 1959, Losang was born in a refugee settlement in Northern India. Her family soon migrated to Canada, and by the late 1970s founded the Potala Tibetan Performance Arts Group. In 1987 Losang traveled with her family to Tibet, including to her father's village in Eastern Tibet. Welcome and thank you for joining us this afternoon.

STATEMENT OF LOSANG RABGEY, A COMMONWEALTH SCHOLAR AND PH.D. CANDIDATE AT THE SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON, ENGLAND

Ms. RABGEY. Thank you for the opportunity to address this Commission. In addition to my doctoral research in feminist anthropology in the Tibetan diaspora, I am also writing and pursuing research on Tibetan language issues, such as the production and consumption of Tibetan media. The following presentation though, is intended to be a very brief background for those who are interested in Tibet, but not necessarily specializing in the area.

In the course of working on a new primary boarding school in Litang county, I was struck by a number of paradoxes. Since my last visit, a new subdivision had been built in Litang. The broad paved streets and electric wires appeared typical of any new

subdivision. However, all the new homes were built in traditional Tibetan architecture. Street after street, the sight of large comfortable Tibetan style homes resting in the neat rows was a sight I did not expect and which I frankly found impressive. The city's planners could easily have followed most other Tibetan towns and cities by constructing non-descript concrete homes and apartment blocks. Yet, despite this subdivision, I was at the same time also struck by the number of public signs only in the Chinese language. Most signs for streets, shops, hotels, restaurants, and so on are still in Chinese and rarely in Tibetan.

In another example of the paradox, in attending a number of meetings with local county educational officials, I was impressed by the Tibetan dress protocol insisted upon by the county head. The county head, himself, insisted that all Tibetans attending official meetings must wear their "chuba" or traditional robes. He himself is never without his "chuba" and is even rumored to have sent some Tibetans home to retrieve their robes before re-joining a meeting. Yet I was also struck by the fact that at these countless meetings, much of the conversation was being held in the Chinese language. The population in Litang includes many more Chinese settlers now than a decade and a half ago. The majority of the local population and county officials remains Tibetan, and although these officials are educated in both Tibetan and Chinese, Chinese has become the language of official business.

So, therefore, the paradox is that while there is a clear consciousness of the importance of Tibetan culture and language, there are profoundly important ways in which this consciousness is not being realized. Simply adding Tibetan language to the curriculum or solely advocating a bilingual education will not necessarily suffice. This is clearly a complex problem requiring a complex solution.

On our first return to the Litang area 15 years ago, it was clear that basic education was a critical need in the area. Aside from the monastery, there was, in fact, little local interest in education as parents then feared their children would only learn Chinese. But in recent years, with the opening of the region, schools and other projects have become possible. We recently began to raise the necessary funding for the capital expenditure for the school and worked with local governments to set up the school's infrastructure and administration. The school currently consists of 210 students ranging from ages 7 to 12, a principal, 10 teachers, and other staff members, including guardians for the younger children. Due to the scattered geography of the hamlets and villages of the area, the children could not travel on foot on a daily basis, and it was, therefore, necessary to build a boarding school. The project began 2½ years ago and opened its doors in September 2002.

From the outset of our working relationship with Litang County education officials, we stated that we had two very clear interests. First, we expressed our committed interest in working for a bilingual school that focuses on Tibetan language as the medium, but which also teaches the Chinese language well. Second, in recognition of the long overdue attention needed for girls' education, we expressed serious interest in seeing gender parity in the student body. The local education officials were also very interested in Tibetan language acquisition along with Chinese language instruc-

tion. Chinese is taught as a second language with the main medium being Tibetan.

In terms of the curriculum, the students followed the standard curriculum of the other Tibetan schools in the county: history, math, science, physical education, Tibetan, and Chinese. The availability now of Tibetan-language textbooks is a tremendous resource. However, much more can be done in the field of writing and translating books into Tibetan language to interest and encourage Tibetans of all ages to read more in their native language. Like many other rural and nomadic Tibetan areas, the school in Chungba Valley has had the added challenge of dealing with a particular sub-dialect of the Kham dialect of Tibetan. As such, the school has one teacher who speaks the local dialect and can, therefore, facilitate the learning process using a vernacular the children already know. Currently, there is an active effort going on to identify more teachers who speak the local vernacular to facilitate the students' critically important early learning years.

At this early stage in the project, we have introduced a number of practices that are relatively new to schools in the Litang area. First, classes run 6 days a week, there are tutoring sessions during midday break for students wanting further instruction, and also, remedial classes are available for those students who need extra guidance and assistance with their lessons. In order to help compensate the teachers for their long work hours, they are offered a significant increase above their standard teacher salary.

Although the majority of these 210 children have never set foot in a school before, they have learned quickly to adapt themselves to their studies. In the preliminary examinations in December, they placed first in the county, and were actually tested twice to make sure the results were accurate.

In considering the issue of Tibetan language and bilingual education for Tibetans in Tibetan areas today, I find it quite interesting that in a number of ways, there are parallels between the situation for Tibetans in diaspora and for those inside Tibet. I am from the first generation of Tibetans to be raised in the Western diaspora. Growing up in working class neighborhood in a small town in Canada with only a few other Tibetan families, there was no context whatsoever for Tibetan culture. My parents, therefore, faced the typical immigrant challenge of transmitting a distant culture to their children.

We managed to learn and then retain the Tibetan language by following a strict rule of speaking only Tibetan in the home. The Tibetan linguistic environment home was supplemented by occasional Tibetan lessons at an informal Sunday-school taught in turn by various parents in the community. Whether Tibetans live in Washington, DC or Beijing or a town like Litang, the issue of retaining Tibetan language and finding a way to make it a seamless part of life is a challenge. When Tibetans from Tibet visit the United States or other Western countries, they are often dismayed to encounter many Tibetan children here who can no longer speak Tibetan, sometimes even after years of language education in India.

A parallel situation is found in large Chinese cities such as Beijing, where many of the young Tibetans may understand some Ti-

betan, but cannot speak, read, or write in their native language. I have even encountered Tibetan children in Tibetan towns who do not speak Tibetan. They tend to be children who attend Chinese medium schools and speak Chinese at home with their parents who are middle class.

So over the years, I have engaged in conversations with many Tibetans educated at universities in Tibet and China. It is their experience and feeling that the current system produces a cyclical effect. Tibetans who study Tibetan language become teachers who, in turn, eventually become language teachers to teach more teachers. So, although there is a clear and growing need, for Tibetan language teachers, my point here is that Tibetan must become a language that is used in fields other than just teaching and government work.

There is burgeoning literature on Tibetan education written in Chinese by both Tibetan and Chinese researchers. I am sure members of the Commission are following that conversation and to anyone who is interested in this field, I recommend watching the extent to which the points are being pushed. A primary opportunity and challenge ahead for Tibetans is to become not only bilingual, but also bicultural. To teach and learn either Tibetan or Chinese to the exclusion of the other will eventually present obstacles in the future, yet being bilingual is also not enough. Tibetans need a Tibetan cultural and economic context in which to express, use, and further develop their language and communities. The need for Tibetans who are conversant and comfortable functioning in Tibetan and Chinese societies will clearly be an asset to their communities.

I would like to conclude by stating that Tibetans are now at a critical juncture. Whether inside Tibet or in diaspora, Tibetans have never before faced a period of such rapid social change. It is in the hands of the current generation of Tibetans and those interested in Tibet to set the ground work for positive and productive change. The opportunities are tremendous. Clearly, Tibetans need education, but in order to meet that need, Tibetans need resources and support.

There are a host of organizations, at the local government level, Tibetan and foreign NGOs, and so on, that need the basic capital investment necessary to build schools, clinics, vocational training centers, adult learning centers, libraries, and so on. Tibetan trainers also need training. There is a tremendous shortage of Tibetan human resources at all levels, but the energy, commitment and intellectual resources are there. But funding is needed to train a generation of Tibetans who are eager to make a solid contribution.

The opportunity to learn and travel affords researchers not only added perspective, but also gives them further responsibility to engage with the realities they encounter. There are the realist nay sayers who present rationalized accounts of why educational engagement in Tibetan areas is hopeless. Some point to Inner Mongolia and even Manchuria, but if I did not believe there was hope, I would not be here seeking support for the survival of Tibetan language and education. As a researcher, a refugee/immigrant, and as a Tibetan with roots in a rural mountain village, the issue of the future of Tibetan language and education is clearly a path that needs to be traveled.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Rabgey appears in the appendix.]

Mr. FOARDE. Thank you very much.

We will let our three panelists catch their breath for a minute, while I make an administrative announcement or two. Our next issues roundtable will be after the spring district work period that is coming up this month. It will be on Monday, April 28 at 2:30 p.m., right here in this room.

The subject will be corporate codes of conduct and the behavior of U.S. companies in China. We will be sending an announcement out a bit later this week to our e-mail list. So, if you want to be always in the know about what we are doing here, please visit our Web site and subscribe to the e-mail announcement list. You will get information week by week on our upcoming hearings and roundtables. You also can get the same information by visiting our Web site frequently, and that is *www.cecc.gov*.

Now we are going to go to the question and answer session. As we have in the past, each of the staff members sitting up here will get the chance to ask questions and listen to the answers for 5 minutes each until everyone has completed a round. And we will do another round until we are all out of steam, or 4 o'clock rolls around, whichever is first.

So, let me begin by addressing a question to Losang, please. Are Tibetan parents, particularly in rural areas, more interested in having their children educated in just the Tibetan language, or do they see benefit in being educated in both Tibetan and Chinese?

Ms. RABGEY. The example that I am most familiar with is the particular valley in which I work. There I would say that there has been a very significant shift in the parent's attitudes. Fifteen years ago, the parents did not want their children in schools. They were very worried about losing their Tibetan cultural identity by sending children to the schools. Here they would learn primarily Chinese.

I think a lot has happened in the time in between, and the request for the school to be built actually came from the people living in that valley. So, there was a strong interest. Parents are clearly interested in having their children educated, for starters, then given the choice, to have them educated primarily in Tibetan. But, they realize it is of critical importance to teach more than one language, namely Chinese, as well.

Mr. FOARDE. Thank you. Very useful. David Germano, I am really interested in this whole idea of literacy in a standard Tibetan dialect, and I wonder if you could go into that just a little bit more deeply just to make sure that we all understand. It seems to me that, from what you said, the Lhasa dialect, or Lhasa language is kind of becoming a de facto standard Tibetan because of its use in Lhasa and around the Tibetan Autonomous Region, and then also in the diaspora. Did I understand that correctly? Could you comment a little bit on that, please?

Mr. GERMANO. Yes, Lhasa Tibetan has very particular kinds of features about it, which are not continuous with standard Tibetan, but standard Tibetan is essentially based on Lhasa Tibetan, minus a number of the particular features unique to Lhasa City. Standard Tibetan, or so-called "cikay" [spyi skad], has emerged in the past three or four decades, based on the one hand on the diaspora community where Tibetans from different areas mix together and have

to communicate with each other, but also in terms of achievements in terms of modern media, entertainment, television, radio broadcasting, and so forth, in the Tibetan Autonomous Region itself.

So, for example, a couple of years ago, Nicolas and I were in the far western reach of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, and it really struck us how easy it was to communicate in standard Tibetan with people throughout that region. Something definitely not true 10, 15 years ago. I've lived extensively in Kham and Sichuan, which is far Eastern Tibet, and even there, I will stumble upon people who actually learned from Voice of America or something. And they speak quite good standard Tibetan. I'll be amazed because I'm kind of stammering my way through Eastern Tibet, and someone starts talking standard. I say, "Oh, you've been to Lhasa." They say, "Oh, no. I listen to VOA all the time."

So, the challenge is basically extending that outside of Tibet Autonomous Region into the further reaches of other parts of cultural Tibet. There are some considerable issues to deal with that.

Mr. FOARDE. This brings up my third question, which I was going to address to Professor Tournadre, but maybe to both of you. What can the U.S. Government do to help this process along, if it is a desirable thing? Are there other programs that the U.S. Government might support, done by private individuals, or private non-governmental organizations that would help in some of the things that you both recommended in your presentations?

Mr. TOURNADRE. I think it is really possible to do something to help the development of Tibetan language and culture. Basically, through funding the people who really know the situation of the language and the culture there, and not general NGOs who know little about the language and culture. We have been working for many years now in Tibet, cooperating with various organizations such as the Tibet Academy of Social Sciences and Tibet University. And of course, we can help independent projects or associated projects run by Tibetans, and we can channel this help. I think this is probably the best way to help. Among other things, have people organize the various propositions I mentioned earlier and many other projects of this kind. The main thing is to give money to Tibetan intellectuals, artists, and writers. We can help through our network to achieve these projects.

Mr. GERMANO. I would just add that—I've been working intensively since 1999 on building United States-China partnerships to deal with Tibetan studies. In a mere 4 years, Professor Tournadre and I and some other professors from Chicago, Oxford, and so forth, have built a series of initiatives that are formally embedded within the very institutional life of China, namely Tibet University and Tibet Academy of Social Sciences and so on.

On two particular issues I would place special stress. First is computing issues. We have been linking computer scientists in America with people in China to actually begin to build the tools that would allow Tibetans to use their on language in script over the Web and in the digital context.

Second, we have been working with professionals in the Tibet Autonomous Region on helping to try to further the standardization of a spoken Tibetan and a vernacular literary Tibetan. But so far, we have been using funding that is really designed for cur-

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riculum material back here. We have had almost no funding that is about doing something there.

So, I would suggest in addition to supporting NGOs and other such operations, supporting committed academic professionals who actually know the language, literary, spoken, and have a deep commitment to helping improve the situation there.

Mr. FOARDE. Very useful. Thank you very much. My time is up. I recognize my colleague, Dave Dorman.

Mr. DORMAN. First, I would like to thank each of you for coming today to provide some very useful testimony on a very important topic. I think all of our Commission members will find it useful dialog.

I would like to ask each of you to address the educational system, in a bit more detail. I think it would be useful for the Commission members to understand the staff make-up in the Tibetan education system. You mentioned that Tibetans are choosing education as a career field. To what extent are the staffs of elementary schools made up of Tibetans? Or if they are non-Tibetans, what is their fluency in Tibetan, or their ability to teach Tibetan? As for the middle schools, I think one of you mentioned that although a Tibetan curriculum exists, it is rarely taught. Is that because the teachers themselves are not capable of teaching a Tibetan curriculum? And as we go into higher levels of education, to what extent is Tibetan literature and culture a serious subject of study, either in Tibet or outside of Tibet in China? And I will look to any or all of you to address this question in any way you would like. Thank you.

Mr. TOURNADRE. First I would like to come back to something that was said by Ms. Losang Rabgey, when she talked about Litang architecture and style of clothing. Everything looks Tibetan and that is the Tibetan paradox. However, as the Tibetan put it: it is "dzüma" [fake]. Tibet is very visual and it appears very colorful, but what is much more important—and why a lot of people like Tibetan culture—is its spirit. And that is now being lost. It is, of course, very hard to transmit the content of this spirit in 10 minutes. There is another very nice expression used in Tibet: It is like an "empty statue." Buddhist statues—they need to be filled up and get a special blessing to be activated, but if they don't get that they are like "empty statues."

Coming back to the question of education, it is the same thing. Normally, Tibetan is used in primary school. However, in the cities now it is being taught less and less. Since the beginning of the 1990s Tibetan language has lost a lot of strength, even at the primary school level. In Lhasa, there are even schools which really begin with Chinese as the first language. Another problem is regional discrepancy. Again, in Lhasa, Chinese is really prevalent. In some rural areas, primary schools teach mainly in Tibetan. When these kids arrive in Lhasa, the main city, or the main prefecture seat, it is a catastrophe because they were taught the main scientific subjects in Tibetan—mathematics, physics, chemistry, natural sciences, etc.—and all of a sudden they have to switch to Chinese. Their marks are completely down. When students enter the University they have exams in Tibetan and in Chinese. The Tibetan students get only one mark although they have to work in two languages, alongside the Chinese students, who need to pass

only Chinese. So the Tibetan students are at a big disadvantage. There is no incentive to know the Tibetan language, so most people don't care about it.

At Tibet University, the Tibetan language department has been replaced by a bigger department called the "Tibetan culture department," so there is no longer a Tibetan language department in Tibet University! Also, apart from Tibetan literature and some rare courses in history or other social sciences, all scientific subjects are taught in Chinese.

On the other hand, if you go to remote areas there is no possibility of learning in Chinese. Since most of the pupils don't know Chinese they cannot move up the social scale;and only about one percent of the kids graduate from high school, the lowest rate in China.

Mr. FOARDE. We are going to—let's come back to that, but we are going to need to go on and let a couple of our other colleagues ask some questions here. I would like to recognize Andrea Yaffe, who represents Senator Carl Levin, one of our Commission members.

Ms. YAFFE. Thank you very much for being here. I have kind of a broad question. I believe historically, if not currently, the Chinese Government had a practice of moving ethnic Chinese to Tibet in order to dilute the Tibetan culture. I'm not sure if that is still going on, but I am wondering what the impact of the highway that is now being built into Tibet will have on the continued dilution of the Tibetan culture? That's for anyone.

Mr. GERMANO. I would say the major—I mean, I am not an expert on the subject, but I would say the major cause for migration is economic, and the government doesn't really have to intentionally migrate any Han Chinese into Tibetan areas, because the migration simply happens for economic reasons. There would be ways in which to discourage it, and those certainly haven't been implemented by the government.

I would say, if you are talking about the railroad being built into Lhasa, that the general consensus is that it will have a seriously negative impact on the Tibetan situation. There will be an easily affordable way for literally hundreds of thousands of Chinese to migrate immediately into the heartland of Tibetan culture. What that will result in will be that Lhasa itself, which is already at the very best half and half, if that, basically becoming largely a Han Chinese city, and then from there on outward. So, I think just the pressures of population percentages will have an extremely damaging effect.

Mr. FOARDE. Would somebody else like to——

Mr. TOURNADRE. Some Chinese intellectuals, friends of mine who live in Tibet, have even told me they are confident that the new train to Lhasa will mean the end of Tibetan culture. This shows that even some of the Chinese feel like this and are concerned about the disappearance of Tibetan culture.

Ms. YAFFE. My second question is—one of you mentioned that one of the sources of the continuance of Tibetan culture is through the monasteries. I am wondering—I mean, obviously, for years the Chinese Government has had a practice of really trying to control the religion of Tibet. I'm wondering what the current state of reli-

gious freedom is there, and if the monasteries are still open to the continuing of Tibetan culture?

Mr. GERMANO. Well, as the religious studies professional—I can answer that. I spent much of my adult life in religious communities and monasteries and other types of religious communities, particularly in Tibet and parts of China. I would say it is tremendously variable. I mean, some areas like around Lhasa are extremely tightly controlled in terms of the intellectual activities, the number of residents, the type of residents, and so forth. Other parts such as Sichuan, and Qinghai and traditional Tibetan cultural regions, you have a lot more freedom, relatively speaking, where you have large monastic environments and they are able to pursue their own kind of practice and intellectual concerns.

So, it is very variable, but the situation does shift dramatically, such as the recent crackdown in Sichuan among some large Tibetan communities that I spent time with. But, I would say overall that—although I have spent my life studying Tibetan and Buddhism and so forth, and teaching it, the kind of personal epiphany I had was in 1997, I believe, when I was in Lhasa for about 8 or 9 months and my daughter was going to school behind the Potala, in kindergarten. As I watched and pondered my personal future and the future of Tibetans, what really struck me was that it is not the monasteries, it's the schools that are the real crux.

The real heroes in Tibetan culture are not the monks, and they are not the political protestors. They are the teachers. And that is where we should be putting our efforts and energy. So, I think Tibetan religion is very important, but despite lots of problems, the real crux of the matter is Tibetan language on a broad based social context.

Mr. FOARDE. Let me recognize our friend and colleague Karin Finkler, who represents Congressman Joe Pitts on our Commission.

Ms. FINKLER. I think it was Professor Germano who mentioned that the Chinese Government's stated policies on the subject of Tibetan language are positive, even if there is little practical support. Could you clarify what those policies are, and how the U.S. Government could interact with those policies so there is a practical effect on the ground?

Mr. GERMANO. Well, I think it is the kind of policies that Nicolas Tournadre was talking about, where we have publicly stated policies in print form and elsewhere that are about protecting, enhancing, and developing Tibetan language. If one was simply to read these policies and public statements, one would see a very rosy future for Tibetan language and Tibetan culture.

So, they are on record as having very positive, proactive kinds of policies about Tibetan languages. The problem is on the ground, the actual execution of them is often minimal. But, what I think many of us have found who work with the Chinese Government, and educational institutions, is they are willing for those policies to be implemented from external support, if they are convinced that those people are working in a responsible fashion toward goals that they don't see as antagonistic to their own. And that's, I think, the important thing to note. That one can move forward on the basis of those policies, if one does so in a way that is attuned to

what is actually happening in the fabric of Chinese politics and the educational life.

Ms. FINKLER. Anybody else?

Mr. TOURNADRE. Just one response to the previous question.

Mr. FOARDE. Sure.

Mr. TOURNADRE. Coming back to the question of the relationship between the monastery and Tibetan culture: it is important to understand that the general cultural level in the monasteries is reduced because the great lamas are either outside Tibet or are not allowed to teach in the big monasteries.

So why are so many young Tibetans going there? Apart from religious, economic, and personal reasons, it is mainly because the monasteries are among the few places where Tibetan is spoken and the literary language is used.

Mr. FOARDE. Good. Do you have a comment now on Karin's question?

Mr. TOURNADRE. No.

Mr. FOARDE. Somebody else?

Ms. RABGEY. First of all, I agree with what Professor Germano has stated. I think that if the local Chinese officials are confident that the NGOs are academic institutions and are working with a similar interest in furthering Tibetan education, or development of the Tibetan language, I think there is room for cooperation. External support of that process would be tremendously helpful.

Ms. FINKLER. Could you be a little bit more specific on that? Does that mean an NGO that the Chinese Government already works with on educational issues, or what does that mean?

Ms. RABGEY. It includes work within the academy, between academic institutions, with NGOs working on economic development that would further support a Tibetan language community, and nonprofits that work in the very local levels. There are a number already working inside Tibet who have made tremendous headway, and I am sure there will be more to come in the future, especially as more and more Tibetan regions open up.

Mr. TOURNADRE. A lot of NGOs are working in Tibet in the fields of the economy or health care. That won't help so much to preserve Tibetan culture itself. That is why it is so important as Professor Germano mentioned earlier, to help Tibetan scholars, writers, artists, or associations that are directly working with the people who are concerned about Tibetan language and culture. Of course, promoting health care and developing the economy are also very important, but that is a different issue, although it is also connected.

Mr. GERMANO. To be very specific, in 2000, Nicolas and I proposed a series of initiatives in Lhasa to—which all went through the highest ranks in the government to be approved—establish new materials for the study of Tibetan language, colloquial language and literary language; generating new computing software, which allows for the transcription of video and audio content in Tibetan script and Chinese translation and English translation; and then going around to different regions of Tibet documenting traditional forms of Tibetan literature, Tibetan practices, and producing them in these materials for dissemination outside of China, as well as in Tibet.

We have had, essentially, full support on that. And now we are about to finalize a contract with Tibet University on the same fronts. We also helped establish a center at the Tibet University computing science faculty, with 16 ethnic Tibetans—no non-Tibetan whatsoever in the department as of last year—who have a center for developing Tibetan language computing solutions, full rhetorical support from the government. But, they are waiting for more practical support, which we could be of help with.

Mr. FOARDE. I would next like to recognize our staff expert on Tibet and issues having to do with Tibet. He is your friend, and our colleague, Steve Marshall.

Steve.

Mr. MARSHALL. I think all of this is wonderful and fascinating, and it is really great to hear everybody talking about it. I would like to ask one question very quickly and get a very sharp, clear answer from each of you, and then go on to another question.

May I infer from what each of you have said that this kind of proactive education can be carried out in Tibetan areas without risk to either the students, or the teachers, or the funders as long as politics are left aside?

Mr. GERMANO. Yes, if the people know what they are doing.

Mr. TOURNADRE. Yes, it could be carried out without risk. In Tibet, as well as in the whole of China, there are many things you can do if you know the people and they trust you, if your activity is not political or anti-Chinese. As far as we are concerned, we believe that preserving Tibetan language and culture does not mean acting against Chinese culture. We believe the two cultures can live side by side and even enrich each other. There are many countries in the world where two—or more—languages and cultures are living together; for example, Spain, Canada, and Switzerland. And these cultures are not necessarily in competition.

When you work in Tibet, you need to have connections with the right people in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and Prefectures, people who know how to operate within the Chinese and Tibetan contexts.

Ms. RABGEY. I think it is possible. I think you have to develop very good local community networks. I think you have to be careful and transparent with what you are doing and develop trust.

Mr. MARSHALL. Thanks. Let's get a little bit more detailed now. There is a rural/urban divide here. The rural area is where most Tibetans live, where they get their primary education. The urban areas are where people go to carry out professional careers. Where is the emphasis at this really critical stage of the struggle? Should we be focusing more on trying to get Tibetan kids a good start and a primary education, or should we be looking further down the road, and trying to find professional level education for them in Tibet? How do we balance this? Anybody, please?

Ms. RABGEY. This is not my primary area of research, as I stated at the outset, but my personal feeling on this is that all of these different things have to be happening at once. If we don't have professional level education, and just solely focus on the primary, middle, and high school levels, where are these people going to go next? If we just focus on the other end, you know, same situation. I think we need all of this happening at once.

Mr. TOURNADRE. Yes, that is basically what I was going to say, and that is what I have done. On the one hand, with the association "Schools on the Roof of the World" helping to build four schools in rural areas; and on the other hand, and in cooperation with Professor Germano, we have helped writers and scholars at the other end of the scale, in urban areas. So, I think we have to do both. At this time it is really a very urgent question, and we have to help at any level.

Mr. GERMANO. I would say that too often people make that kind of split between the rural and urban in Tibet. And that is exactly what the problem is. They look at urban environments as if only a few people live there, there are only a few cities of size. Thus they deduce that we should focus on the rural environment. Or of course, the opposite is just as profoundly mistaken. What is necessary is an understanding of how urban and rural communities are involved in complex patterns of interdependence, and thus support should address that deep interdependence.

It is basically the middle school where it all falls apart. The middle school needs new curricular materials that are compelling. They don't need these kinds of artificial, well intentioned, but poorly made materials. They should have local significance, and yet also educate the people in terms of broader national and international needs. They should use new technologies.

These materials need to be implemented in the middle school. It needs to be bound up with the university system. Part of what we can contribute is helping to envision new partnerships, as strange as it might seem. I think often those of us who work in China, find that we spend much of our time introducing Tibetans to each other.

Mr. MARSHALL. Thank you.

Mr. FOARDE. We will come back to these questions, because they are very interesting, and give Steve another chance here. First, I would like to recognize Susan Roosevelt Weld, the general counsel of the Commission.

Ms. WELD. Thanks, John. I remember, I guess it was you, Nicolas, who mentioned how to raise the prestige of the Tibetan language and the Tibetan culture in the eyes of the Chinese people. And I presume that's got two sides to it. One would be the Chinese living in Tibet, and then the Chinese and official circles inside of China.

Now, this law is actually very interesting, what you summarize of it. It says everybody who is resident in Tibet, no matter what group they belong to must take Tibetan, I believe it says that?

Mr. TOURNADRE. Right.

Ms. WELD. So, if there were an exam which students need to pass to go into higher education, and to pass they would have to take Tibetan and excel in it, and if that were enforced, would that solve some of the problems? In other words, how could the law be altered and be more effective in your view?

Mr. TOURNADRE. Well, the recent regulation on the Tibetan language in China is great. It says in article 1 that "Tibetan is the common language of the Tibetan Autonomous Region." The problem is that it is not enforced. It is not implemented. The main issue is how to implement it. I think we have to get people to know about the regulation, talk about it, broadcast it everywhere. These

regulations are going in the right direction. But without incentive, these regulations remain empty. The law was passed last May; however, as far as I can see, there has been no change whatsoever.

We can also help to raise the prestige of the Tibetan language, through financial help. Prestige is actually linked with economic status. If the Tibetans start to think that knowledge of Tibetan language and culture bring them some advantages in the social and economic realms, they will turn back to their own culture. Right now, a lot of people think it is absolutely useless. So helping to fund all kinds of small projects is obviously very important.

The help should not neglect the nomads and peasants. The nomads are now facing an incredible challenge to stay on the high plateau and keep their way of life. That is extremely important, not to forget them, even though it is much more difficult to work with them than to work with intellectuals, artists, or scholars.

As everywhere in the world, in Tibetan rural as well as urban society, prestige is largely linked to money.

Ms. WELD. When you look at China as a whole, as a rule of law issue, many of the most enlightened bits of legislation don't have a cause of action embedded in them so that a citizen could enforce them. Would that be helpful, if there were regulations under which say, the Tibetan parents could sue the school district?

Mr. TOURNADRE. I believe so. Now the people in China are really beginning to use the law and sue even their administration. That is the case in the big cities—Shanghai, Guangzhou, Beijing. The people find ways to have the law enforced. So I am sure since the law exists, it can have very important consequences. It is a powerful tool. Now it is very important to do everything we can to have this law enforced. And we will find the means. What you suggested is certainly one of them, and Tibetans will go for that.

Mr. FOARDE. Let's go on to recognize Andrea Worden. Andrea.

Ms. WORDEN. Thanks, John. I actually have a related question. I'm wondering, even before this new regulation was passed, to what extent, just anecdotally or otherwise, do Han Chinese living in the TAR learn Tibetan, in particular, Han officials?

Mr. GERMANO. That's in some ways an easy question to answer, and in other ways more difficult. The easy answer is rarely. It is very difficult for Tibetans to work through administrative issues or other government issues using Tibetan. We are all familiar with the phenomenon of Han Chinese who are even born and raised in Lhasa and simply don't speak a word of Tibetan.

That said, there are examples of Chinese in the Tibetan administration and Tibetan Autonomous Region who are fluently bilingual. And there are certainly Chinese children who, if they are positioned right or wrong—depending upon your perspective—in terms of playmates and so forth, who do grow up speaking Tibetan. But it continues to be relatively rare.

The much greater positive phenomenon among urban Chinese is the fascination and even obsession with Tibetan culture that I have experienced for the last 15 years repeatedly. Whether that is good or bad, maybe that depends on your attitude toward Disney and other related issues—because Tibet is the Chinese Disneyland but I see that not necessarily as negative. I see a lot of Chinese with

very sincere appreciation and interest in Tibetan culture, as well as a more ludicrous side to it.

In terms of the language, it is still relatively unusual that you meet a professional who actually has competent command over spoken Tibetan, although there are some.

Ms. WORDEN. I had the good fortune to visit Tibet in 1987; so, it has been quite a while, but when I was there, I met a few young Chinese artists and intellectuals who had left east coast China, and essentially relocated to Lhasa. I am wondering to what extent there is such a community now in Lhasa, or outside Lhasa, and to what extent they may also be helping the cultural and linguistic issues you discussed?

Mr. TOURNADRE. Yes, certainly, I think this community is growing because there is a real fascination for the Tibetan culture. A lot of Chinese intellectuals or educated people, especially from the big cities—Chengdu, Beijing, Shanghai, Lanzhou—come to Lhasa, and they are getting in contact with Tibetan intellectuals and artists. These Chinese show a genuine interest and concern for the Tibetan culture. This is a new phenomenon. This gives some hope. Some of them are even trying to learn Tibetan even though the number of Chinese living in Tibet who speak Tibetan is certainly much less than 1 percent.

Mr. FOARDE. Let me recognize our friend and colleague, Lary Brown, who works on labor issues for the Commission, but also has an interest in these issues as well. Lary.

Mr. BROWN. Thank you. I would actually like to follow up on Andrea's question. Those Chinese that wish to learn Tibetan, where do they go to learn? Are there facilities there to teach Tibetan to Chinese, or where do they go?

Mr. GERMANO. Well, that is something we have an interest in, because the "Manual of Standard Tibetan," which was originally in French we have been working on rendering it into English and there is a proto-Chinese translation of it as well. One of the things we would be interested in—is different initiatives toward building trilingual materials to help in the targeted acquisition of different kinds of Tibetan competency by Chinese native speakers.

I think at the moment, that is a bit of a problem. Essentially in the secondary school system, the best schools are Chinese medium only. At the university level, there are opportunities, but they are relatively limited. And the Chinese Tibetan curriculum materials are not that impressive.

Mr. TOURNADRE. I have an anecdote on this topic. Last summer a scholar from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences was writing an M.A. about Tibetan culture, and he came to see me to get a version of the "Manual of Standard Tibetan" in English. He told me that in China there was no good manual to learn Tibetan. So, as Professor Germano just said, we really hope there will soon be a Chinese version. Obviously, so far, the Chinese who would like to learn Tibetan have a lot of difficulty getting information about the language, especially manuals, software, and so on. Thank you.

Ms. RABGEY. Just anecdotally, I have encountered a few Chinese intellectuals, academics, who have entered monasteries to seek teachers for private tutorship. That is one source.

Mr. BROWN. I have another question for Ms. Rabgey. You talked about the problems when students go to the elementary school that you helped set up in being able to use standard Tibetan, and the need for teachers who can bridge the gap between their local dialect and the standard form of the language. How long after a student begins at that school does it take them to gain a command of standard Tibetan so they can began to learn in the standard language and no longer need help in their native dialect?

Ms. RABGEY. This is exactly the question we are asking ourselves, because it is brand new and we are going to have to learn as we go to see how in this exact little village, in this precise valley, how long that process will take. I'm sure it varies from place to place depending on the distance from the local dialect to the standard, and depending on how many teachers we can get who actually speak the standard. So many factors are involved, right now it is too early to tell in this particular example.

Mr. BROWN. Thank you.

Mr. TOURNADRE. I just wanted to add a point about that, because it is connected to my research on Tibetan dialects in the five countries where the Tibetan language is spoken. What is extraordinary is the tight connection existing between literary Tibetan and all the Tibetan dialects. If they learn the phonological reflexes between a given dialect—Amdo, Kham, etc.—and the literary language, some Tibetans manage to learn another dialect or standard Tibetan within 3 to 6 months. I have met a lot of people who did not know a word in standard Tibetan and managed to learn it correctly in a couple of months. Of course, I have also met the opposite case, people who stayed in Lhasa 10 years and are still unable to speak standard Tibetan. Usually, it is because they are not interested in learning the standard language and would rather speak Chinese anyway, or because they don't know the literary language.

Mr. BROWN. What I would like you to do, is to talk about creating space for a language within a culture in a social setting. Would any of you care to take us through a Tibetan newsstand? I would like to know what magazines are there? What newspapers are there? What languages are they written in? What style? Is it classical Tibetan? Is it standard modern Tibetan? You know, what is out there now and what are Tibetan people in Tibet actually reading?

Ms. RABGEY. I'll take the first crack at that. My work is not Lhasa or in the Tibetan Autonomous Region, and it is very different situation inside TAR and outside of TAR. There are similarities and parallels, of course, but in the Litang area I was really struck by the difficulty in accessing anything in print in Tibetan. There was one government bookstore that had some materials in Tibetan and Chinese. There were, I think, a total of two newsstands, and I went through them and the majority of the publications were all in Chinese.

So, this is really an important question you are raising. Tibetan needs to become an easily accessible language, with interesting language sources of practical daily use.

Mr. TOURNADRE. Yes, I think that it is an important question. I raised this issue in front of a Chinese delegation of high officials. I said that it is very difficult—nearly impossible—to buy news-

papers in Lhasa—I'm not talking about Litang. They acknowledged this fact, but one Tibetan official finally raised his hand and mentioned that it was possible to buy newspaper in Lhasa's main post office. There are basically 15 newspapers in Tibetan in the TAR and TAPs. Journalists working for these newspapers meet every couple of years and try to coordinate their work. In Lhasa, there are only two or three newspapers, among them the main one, "Bod jongs nyin re tshag par"—Xizang ribao—"The Tibet Daily." Even this one, as I said earlier, is very difficult to find—never mind newspapers from Qinghai or Sichuan, which you can never, ever buy in Lhasa. Before, there were subsidies to these newspapers and they were distributed for free in all the institutions. That is not the case any more. So getting news and newspapers in Tibetan is a real issue in Tibet. That is also a field where one could help. Of course, there is no real tradition of buying a newspaper every morning before going to work, but if they could find quality and cheap newspapers in Tibetan they would probably start to read them. They are eager to read.

Mr. GERMANO. I think even if you get them the content is tedious, frankly. I mean, it makes USA Today look like Shakespeare. That is a real problem.

Mr. TOURNADRE. It is still written in modern literary Tibetan, and not in standard Tibetan which is close to the vernacular and would be easy to read.

Mr. FOARDE. We are coming very close on our time, but we do have a little bit of time left, and so I would like to address one further aspect. Our Commission members are interested in a variety of subjects generally having to do with human rights and the development of the rule of law in China with respect to Tibet—a number of issues that you have raised broadly today, but there is one we haven't gone into, and I would like to take just a few minutes to address it, that is the effect of the problems that are occurring today with the Tibetan language on the study and practice of Tibetan Buddhism.

Now, some people would say, why should it matter? How essential, for example, is a particular language for spiritual faith or spiritual study? For example, a great many Christians do not know ancient Biblical languages of any sort, yet they study Christianity and practice Christianity in there own language. They study Bibles and other Christian religious works published in dozens of languages, and they still consider themselves Christians, and they still have cultural affinity toward Christianity. Are we likely to see that kind of adaptation among Tibetan Buddhists, or is the Tibetan language so integral to it that it is impossible to be a Tibetan Buddhist without having a command of Tibetan? Any or all of you, please?

Mr. GERMANO. That is a very complex question. On the one hand, Buddhism is originally an Indian tradition which has spread all over Asia, to China, Tibet, Mongolia, Japan, and so forth. It is a pressing question that people—at least academics—just spend their day sitting around thinking, is there Buddhism at all, or is there just these things you find in Japan and China and so forth?

So, I think regardless of how you feel on that bigger, philosophical kind of question, Tibetan Buddhism is Tibetan. It is bound

up with the place Tibetans live in, the environment, the weather, the climate, the patterns, the landscape, and the language. These are joined together at the hip. Now, certainly one can become affiliated with Tibetan Buddhism. There are literally hundreds of thousands of Chinese, I would say, who consider themselves to be Tibetan Buddhists by one profile or another. Lots of Americans consider themselves to be such as well.

But it is not the same thing. It is not the same as a Tibetan who's practicing Buddhism in his or her own traditional language and ways and patterns. It's not that it is meaningless, but when you are thinking about the future of Tibetan Buddhism as something that has been promulgated and maintained by the Tibetan people, I believe it is joined up at the hip with the Tibetan language. What happened in Christianity has all sorts of parallels, but they are parallels stretched over a 2,000-year history with the rise of vernacular European languages, the issue of Latin as a High Mass language and so forth.

Tibetan is now at one of these junctures. If we value the particular forms that are bound up with Tibetan culture, Tibetan landscape, and Tibetan people, then yes, the Tibetan language is absolutely crucial. Otherwise, it is something else. And that something else is not necessarily good or bad. But, if you care about that 1,300-year history of Tibetan culture, that won't be here any more. Something else will be here.

Mr. TOURNADRE. I would just add one point. There is no Bible in Tibetan. Tibetan Buddhism is an atheistic religious philosophy dealing primarily with the nature of Mind. In fact, there are thousands of Buddhist commentaries that are written only in Tibetan. They are not available in Chinese or in English. Maybe 5 percent of Tibetan literature has so far been translated into other languages. So in order to practice Tibetan Buddhism and to enjoy the philosophical aspects as well the poetic dimension of all this enormous literature, there is no other way than to learn literary Tibetan.

Mr. FOARDE. Let me give the final question for today to Steve Marshall. Steve.

Mr. MARSHALL. I wish I had another hour to follow up all the loose ends. I would like to ask the last question about this idea of "genuine bilingualism," something that is truly two distinct languages used for distinct purposes, rather than just a chaotic mix that changes on a daily basis.

Professor Tournadre, since you brought that up in your paper, perhaps you would like to mention it first. I would appreciate hearing from all of you.

Mr. TOURNADRE. The trend now is the emergence of a mixed Tibetan-Chinese language that people call ramalugkä [ra ma lug skad], "half sheep half goat language." This is a phenomenon that is analogous to "Spanglish" or "Singlish"—Singapore English—and so on. It is a very dangerous tendency, because it means the people have a shaky knowledge of their native tongue and also of Chinese. They can't speak either language correctly. On top of that, you must really know three languages to get around in Tibetan cities. You have to know Tibetan, Chinese and "ramalugkä." In some situations, with scholars and intellectuals, you must speak "pure Ti-

betan;" in the street and in the market you must speak ramalugkä—mixed Chinese and Tibetan—if you take a Chinese cab, or at school and in the various government agencies, you have to speak Chinese. It is a very complex sociolinguistic situation.

There is no genuine bilingualism in Tibet. When I speak of "genuine bilingualism," I refer to the situation found in some European and North American countries such as Switzerland, Spain or Canada, where people really know the two official languages and are able to use them in a professional context, or any other social context. When they are with their own community, they use their mother tongue, and when they meet with people of the other community, they will switch to the other language.

Right now in Tibet, there is an incredible difference in the prestige of Tibetan and Chinese. There is, of course, a small community of Tibetan intellectuals who still very much value their native language and literary Tibetan; but that is not the case with the general population. However, I do believe it is possible to create full bilingualism at any level of social life in Tibet.

Mr. GERMANO. Yes. I would say speaking as someone whose knowledge of Chinese is limited to food stuffs, i.e., my years of experience in China has a allowed me to order my food with competency. I am very acutely sensitive to when they are speaking Chinese and I don't know what they are talking about at that point.

I think anybody who has spends a lot of time in Tibet encounters four different gradations. One is you have people who are perfectly bilingual. They speak one or the other and it is perfect. I remember I was in a Tibetan place with Nicolas a few years back and there was this hotel manager out in the middle of nowhere, and he just spoke perfectly. And when he switched, his body switched, his behavior switched, everything switched. When he spoke Tibetan, it was perfect. When he spoke Chinese, it was perfect. I know lots of people like that.

On the other hand, you have these people that Nicolas has been referring to as neither goats or sheep. They are the ones who every other word they are saying some Chinese thing, then a Tibetan verb. And you feel like a ping-pong match or something. And these are the ones who are really just mixing these two up haphazardly.

And then you have people who just have a moderate competency in Chinese and use it haltingly, and otherwise are primarily fluent in Tibetan. And then lots of rural Tibetans have no competency whatsoever in Chinese.

So, I think the thing to aspire to is more something where people value that kind of perfect bilingualism back and forth. And then others use Tibetan or Chinese in a kind of halting manner, when they need to. The part that is really problematic is those who are neither goat nor sheep.

Ms. RABGEY. On the issue of bilingualism, genuine bilingualism, I guess, what I would add is that I think it needs to be linked with a bicultural context. A context in which Tibetans cannot just speak Tibetan and then function in a Chinese society, but function in a Tibetan culture. That has many other ramifications.

Also, I think it is always important to keep in mind that most Tibetans are still rural and nomadic. That is going to be a huge

demographic factor we have to keep in mind in any kind of work we do their. The kind of work that Professors Tournadre and Germano are doing is tremendously helpful and absolutely needs to keep going, but we also have a lot of brick-and-mortar work to do, literally. That is just a current demographic reality of Tibet.

I was struck by what David just said, the need to value this perfect kind of bilingualism. I think that is so important, and the children are not seeing that. They don't have necessarily enough of the role models to be able to mimic that kind of perfect bilingualism. I think it is something to strive for, and again, the teacher, training, and resources, the human resources question, I think is very important.

Mr. FOARDE. Thank you. We've unfortunately now reached the end of this afternoon's roundtable. Each of you, and all three of you, have given us a lot of serious food for thought. I am struck by how you have given us illumination of an issue that we looked at in a different way before today. So, thank you very much, all three of you, Nicolas Tournadre, David Germano, Losang Rabgey.

We will reconvene for another roundtable on corporate codes of conduct on April 28, in this room at 2:30 p.m., and I look forward to seeing all of you there. Thanks very much. Good afternoon.

Whereupon, at 4:05 p.m. the roundtable was concluded.]

APPENDIX

PREPARED STATEMENTS

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NICOLAS TOURNADRE

APRIL 7, 2003

THE DYNAMICS OF TIBETAN-CHINESE BILINGUALISM: THE CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

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The ecolinguistic situation in Tibet is complex and unstable, in a constant State of flux. Not only do two great literary languages, Tibetan[1] and Chinese, find themselves side by side, but there are also numerous Tibetan dialects, as well as around 20 other Tibetan-Burmese and Mongolian languages, spoken on the high plateau. This study will consider only the current situation of Tibetan and Chinese, leaving aside the other languages that play only a minor role today. We will examine the sociolinguistic factors at work as well as linguistic policy, in order to try to gain an understanding of the development of Tibetan and Chinese in the region.[2]

Before the Chinese Communists took over in 1950, Tibetan was the only official language in the territories under the Lhasa government's administration. Chinese was completely unknown to the Tibetan population except to a very few Tibetan intellectuals and traders. The linguistic situation was more complex outside of the areas controlled by the Lhasa government in so far as Chinese-speaking peoples had already been settled there for a long time, living side by side with the Tibetans, especially in the border regions.

One of the first tasks of the new Chinese government in the Tibetan areas was to carry out the enormous task of translation into Tibetan of many modern texts, particularly those of a political and technological nature. Through this monumental work stretching over several decades, a great many neologisms were coined to translate the new scientific, technical and political concepts that had been completely unknown in Tibetan up until then. It also led to the publication of bilingual dictionaries. The neologisms were in the main made up based on calques or expressions drawn from the vocabulary of classical Tibetan. The number of literary borrowings from Chinese has remained very low. Tibetan has benefited considerably from the input of Chinese in these areas, exceeding many of the South-East Asian languages in its lexical inventions.

In spite of these positive factors, we have been witnessing, especially since the early 1990s, a very marked decline of Tibetan in almost every walk of life. The real threat hovering over Tibetan has not gone unnoticed by the Chinese authorities. The government of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) has just issued a regulation which aims to protect the language entitled "Decree on the study, use and development of Tibetan."[3] The simple fact that the government is acting to protect Tibetan through the introduction of legislation underscores the gravity of the situation. We will briefly analyze a few articles of these regulations, and in the sections that follow, paint a picture of the ecolinguistic reality of Tibet through some representative examples.

THE FIRST REGULATION PROTECTING TIBETAN IN CHINA

A set of regulations on protecting the Tibetan language was adopted by the People's Congress at the seventh sitting of the fifth session on May 22nd 2002. They were published text in Tibetan translation on the front page of the Tibetan Daily (bod ljongs nyin re'i tshags par) on June 6th 2002, as well as on the sixth page of

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[1] Nicolas Tournadre and Sangda Dorje, Manuel de tibétain standard, Asiathèque, 1998, Paris, republished in 2003 (Manual of Standard Tibetan, Snow Lion, New York, forthcoming).

[2] This text was presented at the Franco-Tibetan Conference on Tibetan Studies held in Peking from October 14th to 16th 2001. Only the part concerning the regulation on Tibetan, which was passed in May 2002, has been subsequently added.

[3] In Tibetan the regulations are entitled bod skad yig slob sbyong dang bed spyod gong 'phel bcas gtong rgyu'i bod rang skyong ljongs kyi gtan 'bebs. bod ljongs nyin re'i tshags par [Regulations on the study, use and development of Tibetan], The Tibet Daily, 6th June 2002. [also published in the Chinese-language version of the same newspaper of 5/6/200, "Xizang zijiqu xuexi, shiyong he fazhan zang yuwen de guiding," Xizang ribao].

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the Chinese language version of the same newspaper (Xizang ribao).[4] It was also partially reprinted in English on May 24th 2002 by Xinhua. Comprised of 19 articles, these are the first regulations of their kind aiming to protect the language of a "minority nationality" in the People's Republic of China. It corresponds to the amendment of an earlier draft bill (tshod lta'i lag bstar gyi khrims) voted by the NPC at the fourth sitting of the fifth session on September 9th, 1987.

Article one states that "Tibetan is the common language of the Tibetan Autonomous Region."[5]

"Tibetan and Chinese have equal administrative status in the Tibetan Autonomous Region" (art.3).

"The Chinese and those belonging to the other minorities living in the Tibetan Autonomous Region must learn Tibetan" (art.8).

"Those bilingual in Chinese and Tibetan will receive priority in recruitment to administrative positions" (art.10).

Some articles are striking in their ambiguity and lack of detail and realism. For example, what is the significance of the first article? Is it merely a pious wish or bureaucratic formula, when we know that in Lhasa as in most cities of the Autonomous Region, it is very difficult to catch a taxi, go to the market or to any public office if one speaks only Tibetan.

Also, what is the meaning of article 4, which stipulates that for important meetings, both languages, or even just one of them (!) can be used. Yet, as long as it is possible to use only one language, there is scarcely any doubt that Chinese will be the one chosen. Another feature of this regulation is the absence of any coercive measure or meaningful incentive.

The previous bill voted in 1989 was more coercive. In particular, it required Tibetan children to learn Tibetan. According to the new regulations, the choice is left up to the family and young Tibetan children may choose to learn only by enrolling in Chinese classes[6] and sit their examinations only in Chinese. If they enroll in Tibetan classes,[7] the Tibetan language becomes compulsory but, in Lhasa, the curriculum is completely in Chinese (mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology etc.). In the county capitals, up to senior secondary level (ninth class out of the 12 years of the curriculum), the textbooks for scientific subjects have been fully translated, but only some teachers use them.[8]

The entrance exam to university in no way encourages students to choose Tibetan, as they must also take a Chinese exam and are given a single overall mark equivalent to the mark they get for Chinese.

The 2002 regulations are admittedly a positive step forward, but one can have doubts about their implementation, as they are accompanied by no coercive measures or strong incentives. Moreover, they operate on a purely theoretical level, with no pragmatic dimension. No mention is made of the problem of dialects, nor of the standardizing of the spoken language. The regulations similarly remain silent on diglossia (literary and spoken Tibetan), which does constitute an enormous barrier to the learning and spread of Tibetan.

Since being passed, these regulations have gone largely unnoticed, even within the Tibetan population, and it has had no noticeable impact. Official meetings and documents are still in Chinese—which remains the language of the education system and of public administration.

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[4] The difference in priority of information between the Tibetan version (front page) and the Chinese one (page 6), as well as the immediate circulation over the internet incline us to think that we are dealing with a public relations ploy.

[5] Chinese: zang yu wen shi zijiqu tongyong de yuyan wen zi. Tibetan: bod skad yig ni rang skyong ljongs kyi spyi spyod skad yig yin. Of course, this regulation applies only to the Tibetan Autonomous Region and not to the Autonomous Prefectures of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces which cover a territory that is almost the size of the Autonomous Region and whose Tibetan-speaking population is larger than the latter's (2 096 718 for the Tibetan Autonomous Region and 2 478 259 for the Autonomous Prefectures. Cf. Catriona Bas, Education in Tibet, Policy and Practice since 1959, Zed Books in association with TIN, p. 265). However, the linguistic situation in the ten Autonomous Prefectures is quite comparable to that of the Autonomous Region, Chinese being equally dominant in public life there. Of course, there are differences and particularities in the ecolinguistic situation of the Prefectures, but we will not go into these in this present article.

[6] Chinese: hanzu ban; Tibetan: rgya rigs 'dzin grwa.

[7] Chinese: zangzu ban; Tibetan: bod rigs 'dzin grwa.

[8] From the beginning of secondary education (the sixth year of 12 in the Chinese curriculum), instruction is given in Chinese in the majority of schools. This is the case in the districts of the Region, as it is in those of the Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan provinces.

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THE "DEVALUATION" OF TIBETAN

In China, the period of the cultural revolution turned out to be one of terrible regression in all fields of cultural endeavor, but in certain regions of Tibet this regression also affected the written language of Tibetan which was quite simply outlawed for several years. After this dark period, Tibetan was able to take off again in the 1980s. A number of literary journals sprang up and many popularizing works appeared. Pilot schools in which scientific subjects (mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, etc.) were taught in Tibetan were set up in various regions in Lhasa, Zhikatse (Chinese: Rigaze) and in Lhokha (Chinese: Shannan). In 1991, official Chinese statistics clearly showed that Tibetan high school students were obtaining better results in scientific subjects when they were taught in their mother tongue. These results were even announced on television in both Tibetan and Chinese.

However, since the mid-1990s, there has been a steady decline in the use of Tibetan and, conversely, a bolstering of Chinese which is becoming dominant.[9] This new trend can in part be explained by a series of measures which were taken particularly in the field of education. These include an increase in the amount of time for Chinese in the curriculum, and its introduction at an earlier and earlier age (at the present time, it is taught right from the first class of primary school in the main cities). Young Tibetans are confronted with numerous cultural challenges: From the earliest age, they have to learn three writing systems—Tibetan (which only offers few professional openings in present-day society), Chinese (which is the most difficult system in the world), and the Latin alphabet (which is used to learn Chinese phonetic transcription as well as English). That is not the end of the challenge since young Tibetans have recently had, in addition, to learn to count in Chinese, a language that they know only imperfectly and which they do not in general speak at home.

At university, all the scientific subjects and most of the social sciences are taught in Chinese. On the whole, in offices and institutions, only the texts written in Chinese are officially recognized, although theoretically Tibetan also has an official status. More serious still is the fact that all office meetings take place in Chinese and not in Tibetan, and that even when those taking part are all Tibetan themselves.

The lack of interest in Tibetan can be observed through several external signs. Thus, although there is a law requiring bilingual street signs and notice boards, this regulation is not always respected in certain regions. In Lhasa, the regulation is applied, but the billboards in Tibetan are very often written in characters that are much smaller than their Chinese counterparts. Moreover, the signage is often spelled with mistakes in Tibetan, whereas that is rarely the case in Chinese. One incident was reported concerning a large street sign in Lhasa that in Chinese said chuanzang gonglu—"Sichuan-Tibet Road"—and in Tibetan (on account of poor calligraphy) khron-bong gzhung lam—"the Sichuan donkey road."

We could multiply such examples which suggest a decline of Tibetan. The lack of interest that Tibetans show in their own language is apparent both in their attitude and speech, as we shall see in the following section. They justify this lack of interest by saying that Tibetan does not allow them "to fill their stomachs." It is indisputable that Tibetan is of practically no professional value.

There is, however, one area that brings some qualification to what we have just said: the media and, in particular, television. Over the past five years, Tibetan television has put considerable effort in developing programmes and films and represents one of the rare fields in which Tibetan is promoted. Nevertheless, the Tibetan-language television lags far behind the many Chinese channels that offer programmes that are much more varied and attractive.

THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC AND TIBETAN-CHINESE MIXED SPEECH

In the cities, over the past decade, the mixture of Tibetan and Chinese has become considerably more pronounced. In Tibet, this phenomenon is referred to by the term "speaking half-goat half-sheep" (ra-ma-lug skad). This Tibetan-Chinese mixed speech is so widespread that many young people in the urban areas are incapable of forming a sentence in Tibetan without using Chinese words, despite the fact that most of the time the Tibetan equivalents exist. Borrowings from Chinese concern more particularly certain linguistic categories (essentially substantives and more infrequently verbs and adjectives, etc.) and lexical fields. We will give a representative (but non-exhaustive) list of these fields.

• The Days of the Week—In speech, Tibetans almost always use the Chinese terms xingqi yi, "Monday," xingqi er, "Tuesday," etc., instead of the traditional

[9] Even if Tibetan is occasionally present, its status is de facto purely optional.

terms gza' zla-ba, "Monday," gza' mig dmar, "Tuesday," etc. For the time being, most people nonetheless understand the Tibetan terms.

• Numbers—Numbers, and particularly telephone numbers, are almost always given in Chinese. When someone gives their phone number in Tibetan, apart from the surprise element, it seems that Tibetans often experience difficulties as they translate the Tibetan numbers back into Chinese. Dates are also often given in Chinese, especially when they correspond to the international calendar. On the other hand, when dealing with the Tibetan lunar calendar, the dates are given in Tibetan.

• Place names—The majority of names of streets, cities, villages and regions are provided in Chinese, even when these names are clearly attested in the Tibetan tradition. For example, people will say Shannan instead of Lhokha (a region in southern Tibet), Qinghai instead of mtsho-sngon "Kokonor," Kangding instead of dar-btsen-mdo (Dhartsendo, a city in Kham province), sela lu instead of sera lam, "Sera Road" (an important thoroughfare in Lhasa leading to the monastery by the same name), etc.

• The Names of Official Institutions—Institutions and offices are generally referred to by their Chinese name. That is the case even for the most important institutions related to Tibetan culture. For instance, if you speak to a Tibetan taxi driver in Lhasa by referring to addresses like: bod-ljongs slob grwa chen-mo, "University of Tibet" or spyi-tshogs tshan-rig khang, "Academy of Social Sciences," there is a good chance that he will not understand unless you opt for the Chinese terms, respectively Xizang daxue and Shehui kexueyuan. Even the Post Office is generally designated by its Chinese name youdianju and not by its Tibetan names sbrag-khang or yig-zam.

• The Majority of Technical Terms—Although many terms have been formed as indicated above, they are hardly used except by a minority of educated Tibetans. For example, television is more often called dianshi than brnyan 'phrin, a refrigerator bingxiang rather than 'khyag-sgam or a computer diannao rather than glog-klad 'phrul-'khor, which is however a calque on the excellent Chinese made-up expression "electric brain" to which Tibetans have added the word "machine" ('phrul-'khor). In some areas like that of motor parts, the technical terms are sometimes non-existent and in any case it is their Chinese equivalents that are always used.

The list is not, of course, exhaustive and has tended to get bigger over the past few years. Indeed, among some speakers we can observe massive borrowings of Chinese terms, while their grammar remains Tibetan. It is important to stress here that the problem is not only the high number of borrowings from Chinese but the constant switching, which is more or less conscious, between Tibetan and Chinese within the one conversation, or even the one sentence. This is perfectly comparable to the situation of certain North African immigrants in France, who are forever mixing French and (dialectal) Arabic in their conversation.

It is worth noting that many speakers in Tibet know both languages well enough to be able to express themselves in one or the other without mixing them up. It therefore seems that the practice of "speaking mixed Tibetan-Chinese" (ra-ma-lug skad) as well as code switching are essentially related to sociolinguistic factors. Indeed, as has been observed for other languages (Anglo-American and Spanish, Russian and languages of the ex-Soviet Union, etc.), moving from one language to the other or the mixing of both languages corresponds to particular situations and environments. The choice of switching or speaking "pure" Chinese or "pure" Tibetan is most often significant and corresponds to definite social behavior patterns. Let's take as an example illustrating both mixed speech and code switching. The following dialog was related to me by a Tibetan teacher who went to see the (Tibetan) accountant of his work unit (danwei) about getting a bonus. The Chinese expression is given in bold and the Tibetan in Italic.

A: **shenfen-zheng** *ga-par yod* "Where is your identity card?"
B: *'dir yod* "Here it is"
A: **haoma** *mar bris* "Write down the number [of the card here]"
B: *ang gi chung drags nas mthong gi mi 'dug* "The number is [writ'en] too small, I can't read it."
A: **wo bu shi qu qian de! ni ziji xie!** "I'm not the one who has come for money! Write it yourself!"

As can be observed in this short dialog, the accountant is using two Chinese borrowings shenfen-zheng (identity card) and haoma (number). The client responds in Tibetan without any borrowing and in particular uses the word ang-gi "number." His interlocutor then goes into Chinese. It seems here that the language-switching is motivated by the irritation of the accountant who does not think it to be part of his job to fill in the document.

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One may without fear of contradiction suggest that the search for a certain complicity or consensus is, in some situations, going to trigger the move to Tibetan, whereas Chinese will, conversely, be associated with "power" and "the norm." Things are however not quite as straightforward. Generally speaking, code switching and the massive borrowings reflect a linguistic or sociolinguistic insecurity. In fact, many Tibetans are not completely comfortable in either of the two languages.

The sociological context described above occurs in the cities, but in the countryside we find a very different situation. The majority of peasants and nomadic stock breeders who still make up 80 percent of the population, generally have a poor knowledge of Chinese and are often illiterate in Tibetan. When they go into town, these peasants and nomads are faced with an "ecolinguistic system" that is foreign to them. In order to function in urban society, one must really be fluent in Tibetan and Chinese as well as Tibetan-Chinese mixed speech. The Tibetan peasants who do not know or only badly the latter two codes are accordingly marginalized. For example, when dealing with any public institution (hospital, administration, bank, etc.), their poor understanding of Chinese and of ra-ma-lug skad is a serious handicap.

LANGUAGE LEVELS: ANOTHER SOCIOLINGUISTIC PARTITION

In order to complete the sociolinguistic table and present Tibet's ecolinguistic system in all its complexity, we must not forget the question of language levels. Tibetan has in fact one of the world's most complex honorific systems. The existence of language levels is an areal feature that one finds especially in languages such as Japanese or Korean. The honorific register that is called in Tibetan zhe-sa appears in the form of personal pronouns, nouns, verbs, verbal auxiliaries, and even certain adjectives and adverbs. Four types of honorifics are to be distinguished: the ordinary, the higher, the humilific and the double honorific. Honorifics are used in central Tibetan (U) as well as in the dialects of the west (Tsang), but they are not very present in the eastern dialects (Amdo and Kham).

During the cultural revolution, the use of honorifics was very much looked down upon, and even considered dangerous, as it marked one's belonging to certain social classes. For more than 10 years, the honorific was therefore banned, but it made a comeback in the early 1980s. The 10-year interruption in the use of zhe-sa, as well as changes to society and the influence of Chinese have, however, had an impact on the concrete situation of honorifics, with a new type called zhe-sa rkang-chag (clumsy honorific) being introduced. For example, the honorific corresponding to the ordinary register expression chu 'thung "drink some water" (informal) is chab mchod "drink some water" (formal), but at the present time an important part of the population in fact says chab-chu mchod-gnang, an "irregular" form from a traditional perspective, as on the one hand, it mixes honorific and crude language and, on the other, through hypercorrection, it adds a superfluous honorific. The correct use of honorifics is considered to be quite prestigious and, conversely, imperfect mastery of them puts the speaker at the bottom of the social scale.

THE CAUSES OF DECLINE AND MARGINALIZATION

As we have seen above, the sociolinguistic situation in Tibet is a very complex one. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify the main factors that have contributed to the creation of the current ecolinguistic system. Undeniably, linguistic and educational policies are playing a considerable role in the way in which Tibetans conceive of their own language. By excluding Tibetan from the administrative spheres and giving Chinese a predominant position at school and university, by offering only a handful of professional openings based on a command of Tibetan, the authorities have contributed to giving Tibetan the image of a "useless" language. The Tibetans, who have a very pragmatic approach and a great sense of adaptation, have quickly turned away from their own language.

Another important factor is the presence on the High Plateau of numerous dialects that can be classified into three main groups:[10] U-Tsang, Kham-Hor and Amdo that do not allow proper mutual comprehension. The speakers of Amdo often choose to speak Chinese in order to communicate with people from Central Tibet, although they use the same literary language. For a few decades now, there has been discussion about the need to define a standard Tibetan. In the diaspora, and to a lesser extent in China itself, standard Tibetan (Tibetan: spyi skad; Chinese: gonggongyuan) based on the language of Lhasa has been developing spontaneously.

[10] In fact, there are two other major groups: the Ladakhi-Balti and the Dzongkha-Sikkimese, but they are spoken outside of China.

In 1999, a very important book entitled Bod kyi spyi skad skor gyi ched rtsom phyogs bsgrigs [A collection of articles on Standard Tibetan][11] was published in Peking with contributions from the leading Chinese experts in Tibetan language and culture, and coming from all the traditional regions of Tibet (Autonomous Region, Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, Yunnan provinces). All the writers (46 in total), with one or two exceptions, called for giving official status to standard Tibetan based on the language of Lhasa. The regional and central authorities have for the time being remained deaf to this call that would however have important consequences for the economic and cultural development of the Tibetan Autonomous Region and the Autonomous Prefectures.

Finally, one may also cite among the important factors the extraordinary prestige in Tibet of Chinese, which is rightly seen as a great literary and scientific language. This prestige is also due to the fact that all technological innovations come in Tibet through the Han.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE PRESENT LINGUISTIC POLICY

In April 2001, Jack Lang, the then French Minister of Education, made a speech on regional languages in France which began thus: "For two centuries, the political authorities [in France] have fought against regional languages . . . ." Through this speech, the French government launched a campaign to rehabilitate and develop regional languages, considering them henceforth as forming part of French cultural heritage. None of the regional languages spoken in France[12] are, however, comparable from a cultural viewpoint to Tibetan, one of the oldest and greatest literary languages of Asia, alongside Chinese, Sanskrit, Japanese and Mongolian. We must remember that, of the five thousand languages spoken in the world, only about thirty have an original writing system. Among the latter, few have been in existence for over a thousand years, as has Tibetan.

It seems that the education experts in China have not weighed up the heavy sociolinguistic consequences of a linguistic policy that targets only the development of Chinese and neglects Tibetan. In less than 50 years, Tibetan, which is currently part of the cultural heritage of China, has become an endangered language, condemned to an irreversible decline, if not to outright extinction within two generations, if the present linguistic policy is maintained. The responsibility of the regional and central governments in this is obvious. Spoken Tibetan, associated as it is with a major literary language and which benefits from the growing interest of the West, will not of course disappear body and soul, but considerable damage may well be inflicted on it. Moreover, the development of ra-ma-lug skad ("Tibetan-Chinese mixed speech") in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and the Autonomous Prefectures is detrimental to the learning of Tibetan and Chinese alike.

In the long term, the sociolinguistic resentments and behavior patterns of peoples are unpredictable, as is shown by the totally irrational decision of the Republic of Yakutia (Russian Federation) which in 2001 opted for English as its official language to replace Russian. That would not have happened if the Russian authorities had developed a Russian-Yakut (a Turkish language) bilingualism instead of counting on Russian monolingualism (the Russians arrived in Yakutia 400 years ago).

In order to enable proper integration as well as sustainable economic and cultural development in Tibet, it is vital to put in place a truly bilingual Tibetan-Chinese education system which would foster real harmony between the two cultures. In Europe, the cohabitation of different languages within the one State (French, German, Italian in Switzerland or Spanish, Catalan and Basque in Spain) could perfectly well serve as a model.

Over the past few years, Chinese has become crucial to Tibet[13] from both an economic and cultural point of view. However, the fact that the Tibetan language is being neglected may well have disastrous consequences for Tibetan society in the medium to long term. Conversely, developing standard Tibetan and making it official could considerably improve the situation in the field of education, particularly for people on the land and for nomads.

It is therefore urgent that the Party's cadres and the education experts in China rethink their linguistic policy in the Tibetan-speaking regions. It is likely that the present regulation concerning Tibetan will have no significant impact and that only a far-reaching reform introducing a real Tibetan-Chinese bilingualism will be capa-

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[11] Bod kyi spyi skad skor gyi ched rtsom phyogs bsgrigs (Collection of articles on Standard Spoken), Bod yig brda tshad ldan du sgyur ba'i las don u yon lhan khang gis bsgrigs (Committee for the Standardization of the Tibetan Language), mirigs dpe-skrun-khang, Peking, 1999.

[12] None, apart from Occitan, has an historic literary language.

[13] Both in the Autonomous Region and the Autonomous Prefectures of the Chinese provinces of Sichuan, Gansu, Qinghai and Yunnan.

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ble of changing the ecolinguistic situation. If this does not eventuate, the Chinese government's responsibility in the predicted disappearance of Tibetan will not be easily brushed aside.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DAVID GERMANO

APRIL 7, 2003

A BRIEF SURVEY OF ISSUES RELATING TO TIBETAN LANGUAGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

This brief document was prepared by David Germano as informal notes to contribute to a discussion on "Teaching and Learning Tibetan: The Role of the Tibetan Language in Tibet's Future" as part of The Congressional-Executive Commission on China on April 7, 2003. The notes are written for an audience with no prior background on the subject.

The goal of these notes is to summarize issues pertaining to the current situation of Tibetan language in Tibetan culture with a focus on China, the value of Tibetan language in its colloquial and literary forms to Tibetan culture, possible futures negative and positive, and recommendations as to what the American government can do to facilitate the more positive of these possible futures. I have organized the notes into four corresponding sections.

1. THE SITUATION OF TIBETAN LANGUAGE IN TIBETAN CULTURE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

First, a few background facts are necessary to coherently understand anything about the current situation of Tibetan language, which can summed up in terms of the dialects of Tibetan and classical literary Tibetan. "Tibetan" is not simply a language along the lines of modern English consisting of a broad range of speakers who easily understand each other in accordance with standard spoken forms enforced by modern media, lexical materials and educational system. Indeed, one could easily speak of the so called "dialects" of Tibetan as separate languages, following the old adage that a dialect is a language without an army (and, correspondingly, a language is a dialect with an army). The divergence of dialects is great even in a very small geographical area, and are often mutually incomprehensible to speakers without considerable experience traveling. The lack of a transregional spoken "standard" comprehensible universally leads to Tibetans often falling back on other languages—Chinese, English, Hindi, Nepali—to communicate with each other, a problem especially striking in Tibetan parts of China. In the last several decades, there has emerged a proto-standard spoken form based (but not identical to) Lhasan Tibetan. This language, which some hopefully term "general" or "standard" language (spyi skad), is understood widely in the diaspora community, as well as many parts of the Tibetan Autonomous Region. However it remains poorly understood, if at all, by most inhabitants of other areas, including Kham (mostly now administered by the Chinese province of Sichuan) and Amdo (mostly now administered by the Chinese province of Qinghai). The lack of a robust standard Spoken Tibetan thus continues to encourage the reliance on other Chinese as a transregional form of communication among Tibetans from different areas.

Second, literary Tibetan has a long and distinguished tradition going back to at least the seventh century, and has produced a massive corpus of diverse literature including biographies, histories, philosophy, technical manuals, census data and so forth. Since the eleventh century this literary tradition—now typically referred to as classical Tibetan—has been remarkably consistent in orthography (spelling), lexical items, and grammar, so that a competent reader can range widely from the eleventh century to the present. Particularly notable is the remarkably conservative orthography, which means words are typically spelled now as they were in the eleventh century. Unfortunately, most of the dialects are not equally conservative in their pronunciation, such that the spelling of classical Tibetan is in many cases dramatically divergent from the pronunciation of corresponding terms in modern spoken Tibetan. This makes literary Tibetan unnecessarily difficult to learn, and also entails that many colloquial, spoken terms have no standardized spelling.

Classical Tibetan continues to be used, though increasingly confined to monastic arenas, and a handful of elite scholars. A modern literary Tibetan has emerged in creative writing, newspapers, academic essays and the like, though the continuities with classical Tibetan remain strong. The most pressing issue in terms of literary Tibetan relates to overhauls which might make literacy in Tibetan—and especially its day to day use as a means for note taking and communication—more straightforward and compelling to ordinary Tibetans. While certainly there are broader government, education and commercial realities which hinder Tibetan literacy, there

are also compelling internal issues. There has been a partial emergence of vernacular literature, in which spoken terms and grammatical constructions are increasingly coming to the fore, while orthography often privileges regional spoken pronunciation over classical literary forms. These literary forms can be easier to learn for reading and writing for local Tibetans, given the greater continuity with their own speech, while content can also be more compelling for a broader audience. On the other hand, an increasingly vernacularization of literacy also undermines the impressive preservation of a transregional form of literacy over a huge geographical area for ten centuries, not a small consideration.

In this connection, it should be noted that often Tibetans are completely fluent in spoken Tibetan, but lack specific colloquial competencies. In other words, they are unable to have a coherent discussion in Tibetan when it concerns specific professional or intellectual contexts, and especially when tied to bodies of literature. In these contexts they will code-switch to other languages. Part of the problem here is that though an impressive industry has emerged in creating specialized dictionaries providing a swelter of neologisms for new terminology in computer science, mathematics, biology and other specialized subjects, the lack of standardization of such terminology, the failure to implement them in the standard curricular resources, and the general failure to support Tibetan as a medium of learning and exchange in the associated disciplines all has conspired to make such neologisms largely theoretical in import. The key crisis in the education realm is the lack of middle school and onwards curricular materials which are well written, in Tibetan, of compelling content with local significance, and actually use consistently in the educational system.

Another important issue to note is the use of Tibetan script in computer contexts, as computers and the Internet begin to make deep inroads into Tibetan society. The lack of a standard, international Tibetan character encoding—in other words, a set of fonts that can be used in major operation systems and software while perfectly convertible back and forth—has had a devastating impact upon the use of Tibetan in digital and Web contexts form educational sites to commercial venues to social arenas like chat rooms. This situation has squandered tremendous resources on jury-rigged solutions of limited use, and been another strong factor in frustrating the use of Tibetan language in written contexts.

In summary, in addition to government and educational policies in China—which have been formally supportive of Tibetan but not sufficiently so in practice (an understatement)—there are internal issues: the problem of dialects and a "standard" spoken form, the problem of conservative orthography and literary forms in contrast to vernacular literatures, the lack of digital support and other factors that are unresolved problems contributing to the decline of Tibetan as medium for spoken and written exchange. The overall result of these policies and linguistic realities is that Tibetan has reached a crossroads where its future is in serious doubt.

2. THE VALUE OF TIBETAN LANGUAGE TO MODERN TIBETAN CULTURE

So, who cares? Some would consider that what really matters is issues pertaining to Tibetan physical well being (health care, sanitation, etc.), economic well being (new jobs, economic development), and autonomy (especially over issues of immigration and cultural freedom). There are many, however, among Tibetans and non-Tibetans who see the future of Tibetan language as inextricably bound up with Tibetan culture. It is not an issue of whether many need to master Chinese as well—Tibetan language can thrive in a bilingual environment, has been shown in many other socio-linguistic contexts. The issue is the importance and necessity of the continued vitality of spoken Tibetan in its regional forms, the continued emergence of a standard spoken Tibetan that is transregional in character, the development of new forms of literacy that can be acquired and used by the broad public, and the development of new high quality and compelling materials in the classroom, entertainment and the Web written and spoken in Tibetan.

To put it bluntly, why shouldn't Tibetans simply speak Tibetan at home, but speak Chinese in professional contexts and use Chinese for all written contexts? Or even give up Tibetan all together and simply become Chinese linguistically in all ways? These are complex questions that demand more space than I can provide in this limited context. I would simply like to make several major points. Firstly, all studies within China itself have shown what should be obvious—Tibetans simply don't perform newly as well on educational tests when they are trained and tested in Chinese medium contexts rather than trained and tested in Tibetan medium contexts. Thus bilingualism of the private/professional variety will always leave them at a disadvantage, and doomed to be second class citizens in educational and professional circumstances. Just as importantly, such bilingualism, or a whole scale

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linguistic conversion, create a dramatic discontinuity with a thirteen hundred year history of their own highly literate culture. These forms of expression, insights, wisdom, and particularities, fashioned over centuries in intimate relationship to their environment and ways of life will be lost forever, except as conveyed back to them in the language and forms of other cultures. A people's sense of identity, place, time is, as has been argued by intellectual after intellectual over the last century, is inextricably bound up with their language. The lexicon, grammatical structures, figures of speech and many other linguistic habits and traditions encode and reinforce a wide variety of forms of knowledge, notions of self, community and world. When the language is lost, so is the specifically Tibetan identity and the Tibetan world; the culture, insights, values and behaviors of numerically dominant cultures will inexorably pervade the vacuum, yet the new world will be on in which Tibetans remain, forever, second class citizens clumsily manipulating tokens of a world where they are always removed may several orders of distance.

3. POSSIBLE FUTURES OF TIBETAN LANGUAGE

To put it simply, Tibetan language is at a crossroads where in a few decades use of Tibetan for reading and writing could become the province of a few isolated monasteries, apart from which it is for all intents and purposes dead. Spoken Tibetan could easily in the same time period become rare among urban Tibetans, and increasingly under pressures even in rural environments. Within two decades this could come to pass.

Yet even while the factors bringing about the deterioration of Tibetan language continue to gain strength, another future continues to remain possible, even if increasingly a fragile possibility. It is possible to envision a future over the next two to three decades where Tibetans develop standard Tibetan into a widely understood vernacular all across the Chinese provinces of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, Sichuan and Qinghai; new and exciting products emerge in Tibetan literature forms from the sublime to the trivial, from the curricular to the commercial; and Tibetan language again becomes a densely meaningful site for education and daily communication in spoken and written forms. And all of this could be done while continuing bilingualism with Chinese, especially in urban environments, and without necessarily engendering political conflict with the Chinese state. This is a possible future, but it is one that will only come to pass with incisive action and committed support by forces internal and external to cultural Tibet, leading to the fourth and final section of these notes.

4. OPPORTUNITIES FOR AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

I would begin this final section by stating what is obvious to any one conversant with Tibetan language and culture and who has spent extensive amounts of time in ethnically Tibetan areas of China: as committed and expert foreigners, we can make a difference in Tibetan society and language. The possibility is there, it is only a lack of financial resources in the hands of those with the relevant expertise and commitment that hampers rendering these possibilities into vibrant actualities. The position that nothing can be done, that the situation is so corrupt and problematic in "China's Tibet" that any aid is hopeless and even counterproductive, is profoundly mistaken. Individuals—both Tibetan and Chinese—are plentiful with the ability, will power and commitment to make a difference on issues pertaining to Tibetan language. The government's stated policies on the subject are often positive, even if there is little practical support; however various government organizations in China are willing to have others help support these policies if the support is done in responsible and politically viable fashion. Of course easier said than done, but the point is it can be done, and is year after year by people working within the constraints of very limited resources.

What is boils down to is funding. Developmental work benefiting the medical and economic situation of Tibetans is of extreme importance; but it is essential that we do not lose sight of the equal importance of Tibetan language and culture. And the appropriate foreign experts to contribute to aid in these areas are, not surprisingly, those who know Tibetan language and culture from a life time of study. Over the last two decades a committed body of scholars have developed with fluency in spoken and written Tibetan, extensive professional experience in Tibet itself, and a strong commitment to working within system to support Tibetan language in educational, publishing, computing and other environments. It is remarkable, however, how little support these initiatives have garnered from external sources of funding—most US government support for Tibetan language/literature-related initiatives has been for initiatives based back here benefiting US citizens, or has taken the form of one time student and faculty exchanges. What is necessary is an investment in

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Tibet, working with dedicated professionals to help transform and buttress the local institutional infrastructure of Universities, publishing initiatives and other intellectual-literary forums that are best poised to take leadership roles in addressing the creation of new technologies for using Tibetan in the digital age, new curricular materials for deployment in school systems, new literary and spoken products that are compelling for a young child looking for illustrated stories to a teenager looking for a Web chat room to an adult looking for a good read.

While academics are often justly criticized for their philosophical narcissism and lack of commitment to real world solutions, I believe that in Tibetan Studies we have made great strides over the last decade toward responsible and intelligent partnerships with Tibetan and Chinese institutions and individuals on this front. We are now in a position to help develop new generations of technology that allow Tibetans to use Tibetan almost as fluidly as we use European scripts in digital and Web environments, along with the concomitant revolutions in desktop publishing, dissemination of knowledge, and daily forms of written communication. Tibetans in China have the intelligence, passion and willpower to accomplish these revolutions; they only need help in acquiring the supporting resources and tools. The potential impact is tremendous, with effects rippling out to affect secondary education as well as broader areas of public culture. If, however, we simply rely upon market forces or the luck of the draw, the other future, a future of linguistic collapse and degradation, is all but sure to ensue.

These emerging partnerships offer another vision of a better tomorrow, one in which Tibetan and Chinese languages can co-exist, and Tibetans can remain, well, Tibetan, even if situated within a broader Chinese nation. But they require investment of financial resources; ultimately what is at stake is difference, in this case the value of the preservation of the Tibetan difference, a unique identity shaped over centuries which is now in direct danger of succumbing to the forces of sameness that has consumed so many cultures and languages in the preceding century.

The following are practical proposals that would have tremendous impact on raising the prestige of Tibetan and facilitating its use as a colloquial and literary medium for communication, education and entertainment.

Computing and Web support for Tibetan script

- Implementation of Tibetan Unicode as global standard for Tibetan script in computing
- Specific support for use of Tibetan Unicode within various programming languages, software and computing tools
- Translation programs from and to Tibetan, including conversion programs to automatically generate Roman script phonetic rendering of Tibetan
- Chat room support
- Specific curricular and Web site initiatives in terms of content

Establishing vernacular spoken and literary standards

- Support institutional project to standardize spoken Tibetan and vernacular literary involving an inventory of extant, published materials in proto-standard; proposing; standard principles of establishing orthography; building lexicons by applying principles and making exceptions (all keeping in mind that the situation is too urgent to build consensus slowly, and rather must utilize key figures and institutions to establish a reasonable plan that is then made compelling by virtue of the resources behind implementing it)
- Building dictionary and reference grammar using these standards
- Building digital tools based on these standards
- Building popular literature and curricular products based on these standards
- Building curricular materials based on these standards which are of high quality, relevant content, and compelling content

Literary and intellectual competitions

- Establish competitions with prizes/events in spelling, calligraphy, creative writing, essays and Web sites with Tibetan language content
- Do competitions in specific regional settings involving schools, and inviting visiting expert authors, musicians, etc. to participate as a festival of Tibetan language with poetry readings, etc., and contents for locals judged by visiting experts
- Hold broad, transregional competitions promoted and carried out using radio, TV and Web
- Link to establishing communal libraries with innovative approaches and resources

Publishing venues

- Support projects to create vernacular literary versions of great classics of Tibetan literature

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- Support projects to create vernacular literary versions of great classics of foreign literature
- Disseminate literary products over Web, in print, on Radio, and in audio versions on tapes
- Support comic books, children's picture books, teen novels and other such products in vernacular literary
- Collect unpublished proverbs and tales from rural/nomadic areas and publish
- Document regional musical traditions across Tibet and make available over Web and in tape/CD formats

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF LOSANG RABGEY

APRIL 7, 2003

Thank you for the opportunity to address this Commission. In addition to my doctoral research in feminist anthropology on the Tibetan diaspora, I am also writing and pursuing research on Tibetan language issues as well as the production and consumption of Tibetan media. The following presentation is intended to be a brief background for those who are interested in Tibet but not necessarily specializing in the area.

1. SETTING THE SCENE: THE PARADOX OF LITANG

Subdivisions and signs

In the course of working on a new primary boarding school in Litang county, I was struck by a number of paradoxes. Since my last visit, a new subdivision had been built in Litang. The broad paved streets and electric wires appeared typical of any new subdivision. However, all the new homes were built in traditional Tibetan architecture. Street after street, the sight of large comfortable Tibetan style homes resting in neat rows was a sight I did not expect and which I found impressive. The city's planners could easily have followed most other Tibetan towns and cities by constructing non-descript concrete homes and apartment blocks. Yet, despite this subdivision, I was at the same time, also struck by the number of public signs only in Chinese language. Most signs for streets, shops, hotels, restaurants, and so on are still in Chinese and rarely in Tibetan.

Chubas and Chinese medium

In another example, in attending a number of meetings with local county education officials, I was impressed by the Tibetan dress protocol insisted upon by the county head. The county head insisted that all Tibetans attending official meetings must don Tibetan chuba or traditional robes. He himself is never without his Tibetan chuba and is rumored to have sent some Tibetans home to retrieve their robes before re-joining a meeting. Yet I was also struck by the fact that at these countless meetings, much of the conversation was being held in Chinese language. The population in Litang includes many more Chinese settlers now than a decade and a half ago. However, the majority of the local population and county officials remain Tibetans. The Tibetan officials were educated in Tibetan and Chinese but use Chinese as the language of official business. So, therefore, the paradox is that while there is a clear consciousness of the importance of Tibetan culture and language, there are profoundly important ways in which this consciousness is not being realized. Simply adding Tibetan language to the curriculum or solely advocating a bilingual education will not necessarily suffice. It is clearly a complex problem that requires complex solutions.

2. SCHOOL IN CHUNGBA VALLEY

Synopsis

Fifteen years ago on our first return to the Litang area, it was clear that basic education was a critical need in the area. Aside from the monastery, there was in fact little local interest in education as parents then feared their children would exclusively learn Chinese. But in recent years, with the opening of the region, schools and other projects have become possible. We recently began to raise the necessary funds for the capital expenditure for the school and worked with local government to set up the school's infrastructure and administration. The school currently consists of 210 students from ages 7 to 12, a principal, 10 teachers, 5 cooks, a groundskeeper and guardians for the younger children. Due to the scattered geography of the hamlets and villages, the children could not travel on foot to school on a daily basis. It was, therefore, necessary to build a boarding school that could

house approximately 240 individuals. The project began 2½ years ago and the school opened its doors to students in September 2002. Focus on Tibetan Language

From the outset of our working relationship with Litang County education officials, we stated our clear interest in two factors. First, we expressed our committed interest in working for a bilingual school that focuses on Tibetan language as the medium but which also teaches Chinese language well. Second, in recognition of the long overdue attention needed for girls' education, we expressed serious interest in seeing gender parity in the study body. The local education officials are also very interested in Tibetan language acquisition along with Chinese language instruction. Chinese is taught as a second language while the main medium at the school is Tibetan.

In terms of curriculum, the students are following the standard curriculum of the other Tibetan schools in the county—history, math, science, physical education, Tibetan and Chinese. The availability of Tibetan-language textbooks is a tremendous resource. However, much more can be done in the field of writing and translating books into Tibetan language to interest and encourage Tibetans of all ages to read more in their native language. Like many other rural and nomadic Tibetan areas, the school in Chungba Valley has the added challenge of dealing with a particular sub-dialect of the Kham dialect of Tibetan. As such, the school has one teacher who speaks the local dialect and can facilitate the learning process using a vernacular that the children already know. Currently, there is an active effort to identify more teachers who speak the local vernacular to facilitate the students' critically important early learning years.

Instructional interventions: Tutoring and remedial classes

At this very early stage in the project, we have introduced a number of practices that are new to schools in the Litang area. First, classes are taught 6 days per week. Second, there are tutoring sessions during the mid-day break for students wishing further instruction. Also, there are remedial classes for those students who need extra guidance and assistance with their lessons. To help compensate for the teachers' long work hours, they are offered a significant increase above the standard teacher salary. Although the majority of these 210 children have never set foot in a school before, they have learned quickly to apply themselves to their studies. In December the students took their grade one exams and to the surprise of many, they placed first in the county for their grade level. In fact, they were tested twice to ensure the results were accurate. It was recently announced the students have placed first in the prefecture in a number of subjects. Despite the novice status of this school, county and prefecture level education officials are becoming interested in some of the teaching methods at the school.

3. BILINGUAL AND BICULTURAL IN DIASPORA: PARALLELS TO TIBET TODAY

Similar challenges

In considering the issue of Tibetan language and bilingual education for Tibetans in Tibetan areas today, I find it quite interesting that in a number of ways, there are many parallels between the situation for Tibetans in diaspora and for those in Tibetan areas. I am from the first generation of Tibetans to be raised in the western diaspora. Growing up in working class neighborhood in a small town with only a few other Tibetan families, there was no context whatsoever for Tibetan culture. My parents faced the typical immigrant challenge of transmitting a distant culture to their children. We managed to learn and then retain the Tibetan language by following a rule of speaking only Tibetan in the home. The Tibetan linguistic environment at home was supplemented by occasional Tibetan lessons at an informal "Sunday School" taught in turn by various literate parents in the community.

Whether Tibetans live in Washington DC or Beijing or a town like Litang, the issue of retaining Tibetan language and finding a way to make it seamless part of life is a challenge. When Tibetans from Tibet visit Tibetans in the US or other western countries, they are often dismayed to encounter many of the Tibetan children who no longer speak Tibetan, sometimes even after years of Tibetan language education in India. A parallel situation is found in large Chinese cities such as Beijing where many of the young Tibetans may understand some Tibetan, but cannot speak, read or write in their native language. I have even encountered Tibetan children in Tibetan towns who also do not speak Tibetan and they tend to be children who attend Chinese medium schools and speak Chinese at home with parents in the white collar work force.

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4. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD

Developing a Tibetan economy

Over the years, I have spoken with many Tibetans educated at universities in Tibet and China. It is their experience and feeling that the current system produces a cyclical effect. Tibetans who study Tibetan language become teachers who in turn teach young people who eventually become Tibetan language teachers. Although there is a clear and growing need for Tibetan language teachers, my point here is that Tibetan must become a language that is used in fields other than government work and teaching. In short, what is needed is an economic context actively supportive of and supported by Tibetan language.

Expansion of Tibetan contemporary terminology

There is a burgeoning literature on Tibetan education written in Chinese by both Tibetan and Chinese researchers. I am sure members of the Commission are following that conversation and I would recommend a consideration of this literature to others interested in these important questions. A primary opportunity and challenge ahead for Tibetans is to become not only bilingual but also bicultural. To teach and learn either Tibetan or Chinese at the exclusion of the other will eventually present further obstacles in the future. Yet being bilingual is also not enough. Tibetans need a Tibetan cultural and economic context in which to express, use and further develop their language and their communities. The emergence of larger numbers of Tibetans who are conversant and comfortable functioning in Tibetan and Chinese societies will be an asset to their communities.

The need for support

I would like to conclude by stating that Tibetans are now at a critical juncture. Whether inside Tibet or in diaspora, Tibetans have never before faced a period of such rapid social, political and economic change. It is in the hands of the current generation of Tibetans and those interested in Tibet to set the ground work for positive and productive change. The opportunities are tremendous. Clearly, Tibetans need education. But in order to meet that need, Tibetans need resources and support. There are a host of organizations—local level governments, Tibetan and foreign NGOs, and so on—need the basic capital investment necessary to build schools, clinics, vocational training centers, adult learning centers, libraries, and so on. Tibetan trainers need training. There is a tremendous shortage of Tibetan human resources at all levels. The energy, commitment and intellectual resources are there but funding is needed to train a generation of Tibetans in Tibetan areas who are eager to make a solid contribution.

The opportunity to learn and travel affords researchers not only added perspective but also gives them further responsibility to engage with the realities they encounter. There are the detractors who present rationalized accounts of why educational and Tibetan language engagement in Tibetan areas is hopeless. Some point to Inner Mongolia and even Manchuria as the future of Tibet. But if I did not believe from research and direct experience that positive and measurable change was possible, I would not be here before you seeking support for the survival of Tibetan language and education. As a researcher, a refugee/immigrant and as a Tibetan with roots in a rural mountain village, the issue of the future of Tibetan language and education is clearly a path that needs to be traveled.

Fifteen years ago, the parents in the local community did not wish for their children to attend school because they feared losing their cultural identity. Today, after the construction of new boarding school with Tibetan architecture, Tibetan teachers and even some positive preliminary test results by the children, there is clearly a new energy in this relatively remote community. I only wish I could convey to you at this roundtable what it feels like to experience that kind of excitement at the local level. Now, the challenge ahead with the school is to assist the students in sustaining their new found enthusiasm for learning in a bilingual context.

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